AN ANALYSIS AND PERFORMANCE CONSIDERATIONS OF WOLFGANG GABRIEL’S

SONATE FUR BASSKLARINETTE UND KLAVIER, OPUS 30

by

WILLIAM JOSEPH CASADA

(Under the Direction of D. Ray McClellan)

ABSTRACT

Composer Wolfgang Gabriel has written several works for the bass clarinet, exploring the versatility of the instrument. The focus of this study is Gabriel’s Sonate fur Bassklarinette und Klavier, Opus 30. The piece is based on six different Welsh folksong melodies and uses serialism to a high degree in developing these mostly diatonic melodies. This study explores the relationships of these diatonic melodies with the serial elements prevalent in the piece.

This project also explores performance considerations for the bass clarinetist, especially in regards to the altissimo register, which Gabriel uses often. A fingering chart is provided with multiple fingerings for each pitch from written C-sharp6-C-sharp7. These fingerings were developed through experimentation based on soprano clarinet fingerings and the overtones most easily achieved on the bass clarinet.

INDEX WORDS: Wolfgang Gabriel, bass clarinet, altissimo fingering chart, Welsh folk songs, serialism
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INTRODUCTION

Austrian composer Wolfgang Gabriel was born in 1930 in Vienna and began studying the violin and piano at a young age. He has since studied composition with Alfred Uhl and conducting with Hans Swarovsky. He has held positions as conductor with the Akademischer Orchesterverein in Vienna and the chorus of the Bachgemeinde. Among Gabriel's compositions, several have been written for bass clarinet solo and bass clarinet with piano, including 6 Elegies for Bass Clarinet and Piano, Op.82; 5 Bagatelles for Bass Clarinet and Piano, Opus 75; Sonata for Bass Clarinet Solo, Opus 72; Sonatine for Bass Clarinet and Piano, Opus 36; and Sonata for Bass Clarinet and Piano, Opus 30.

This last piece, Opus 30, is the focus of this study. Written for the renowned, late bass clarinetist Josef Horák, the piece is based on six Welsh folksong melodies. The four movement work contrasts alternating slow and fast movements, with the first being marked Andante (quarter=69), the second Allegretto giocoso (quarter=126), the third Mesto (quarter=ca. 60), and the fourth Allegro (quarter=ca. 138). The first, third, and fourth movements contain a great deal of serial elements, with the prime rows being based to a high degree on the melodies which inspired the piece. Gabriel recorded these folksong melodies being sung by various Welsh singers throughout the countryside of Wales. The first two pages of the piano score for this piece give a brief description of the songs, who sang them, and where and when they were recorded.

It is on the characteristics of these melodies that not only the serial rows, but much of the music in general, is based. As such, this study will explore these relationships and the interactions between serial and diatonic elements.

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1 Michael Kaltschmid, Werkverzeichnis Wolfgang Gabriel (Vienna: Braumüller Verlag, 2003), 5.
From a performance perspective, Gabriel provides numerous challenges for the bass clarinetist, with liberal use of the extreme high range of the instrument, calling upon all the facilities of the instrument, as well as the performer. Due to the folksong basis of the music, there is also a degree of lyricism in the piece, especially the two slow movements, that requires a substantial amount of breath support from the performer. These elements, combined with the technical difficulties of playing this larger member of the clarinet family, especially in the two faster movements, provide a very exhilarating and challenging experience for the performer, and a performance that will most likely be very novel and exciting for listeners.

**Purpose of the study**

The purpose of this study is twofold. From an analytical perspective, as has been mentioned, The *Sonate fur Bassklarinette und Klavier* is based on several Welsh folksong melodies, with twelve tone techniques playing a key role in the development and use of the folksong melodies. It will be the purpose of this study to explore the characteristics of these melodies and the relationships of the folksong melodies with the serial rows’ implementation in each movement and throughout the piece. There are also portions of the piece, especially in the second movement, which are not as clearly organized by serial elements. This study will show the relationships of these sections to the folksong melodies on which the piece is based, as well as to the serial materials used in the majority of the piece.

Secondly, this study will examine the piece from a performer’s perspective, highlighting some of the difficulties and extended techniques required for a successful performance of this work. This portion of the study will focus chiefly on performance practice for the altissimo register of the bass clarinet, a subject that has seen little exploration other than by a few
performers who have specialized in bass clarinet (even these musicians have had limited resources from which to draw, many exploring and developing the range themselves, thus enabling composers to write music for this register). This portion of the study will include an in depth consideration of available fingerings and the voicing of this register, including a fingering chart with suggested and alternate fingerings for the bass clarinet above written C6 (sounding Bb4).

**Delimitations**

While Wolfgang Gabriel has written several works for bass clarinet, including other pieces for bass clarinet with piano, as well as solo bass clarinet, this study will focus on the Sonata, Opus 30. Additionally, this project is intended as an in depth study of Wolfgang Gabriel’s *Sonate für Bassklarinette und Klavier*, Opus 30, but not of the composer himself. The goal of this project is to focus primarily on the folksong and serial elements of the composition, as well as performance considerations for the bass clarinetist.

**Need for the study**

Music written for this specific genre of bass clarinet with piano is somewhat uncommon, with the genre not coming into its own until the late nineteen-fifties or early sixties.\(^2\) Of the works of Wolfgang Gabriel, very little research has been done, with apparently no scholarly studies of his bass clarinet works. Additionally, pertaining to the topic of serial rows based on welsh folksong melodies, or any folk melodies for that matter, very little research has been performed.

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In terms of the bass clarinet’s altissimo register, very little material exists on this topic. The most recently published fingering chart that covers the full span of the instrument’s altissimo register was published in 1982.³ This fingering chart is somewhat difficult to read, and has become slightly dated with advances in instrument mechanics, as well as an increased availability of mouthpieces that enable the performer to achieve a higher degree of accuracy of pitch and a clear tone in this register. As part of this project, an updated, more legible fingering chart, along with a discussion of tone production in this upper register, will be especially beneficial to the clarinetist who is interested in performing as a bass clarinetist.

**Organization**

After an introductory section, the first chapter will be dedicated to the analytical portion of the project. This chapter will consider ways in which each movement is individually built and develops the folksong melodies that have inspired the piece, with a final section devoted to themes and processes that have been used throughout larger spans of the piece. The second chapter will be devoted to performance considerations, with techniques for achieving facility in the high register and will include a fingering chart of the altissimo register.

From this document, the script for a lecture recital will be formed. This script will follow much the same organizational pattern as that of the document, with brief introductory comments preceding a discussion of the theoretical elements involved in the combination of the folksong melodies and serial techniques mentioned above. This will include visual examples and performed demonstrations of melodies, tone rows, and other key elements. This will be followed

by a similar presentation of the materials from the second chapter, focusing on general techniques and fingerings for effectively performing in the altissimo register. Finally, the piece will be performed in its entirety at the conclusion of the lecture portion of the program.
CHAPTER 1: ANALYTICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Just as each of the movements in Wolfgang Gabriel’s *Sonate fur Bassklarinette und Klavier*, Opus 30 is based on a different Welsh folksong melody (or several melodies, in the case of the fourth movement), each movement also has its own twelve tone serial rows upon which it is built. In the case of the second movement, serial elements play a very minimal role in the development and implementation of the folksong melody, but in the remaining three movements, elements of the folksong melodies influence the construction of the serial rows to a high degree, and these serial rows, in turn, are crucial to the development of each movement.

In addition to the influence these folksong melodies have on the development of the serialism in the piece, the combination of serial and diatonic elements provides a very unusual and interesting interaction between tonality and atonality. In fact, it is the combination of these elements that drives much of the music and on which most of this analysis will focus.

**The first movement: I. Andante**

The first movement of the piece is based on the folksong melody *Cob Malltraeth*, which Gabriel recorded at St. David’s in Pembrokeshire in September of 1963 (Example 1.1). The singer learned the song from farmhands in Llanfachreth around 1900, but the original subject is a town on the island of Anglesey called Malltraeth. About the tune, Gabriel says that “the song, for the most part, sustains a mock-tragic note but this is triumphantly dispelled in the final stanza.”

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Example 1.1: Cob Malltraeth Melody

This first folksong melody is in the Dorian mode, and Gabriel has here written it in F. The entire first movement, in fact, has a clear pitch center of F, despite its largely serial nature. This is established from the outset, with the initial prime form of Gabriel’s serial row, P5\(^5\), bearing a remarkable resemblance to the melody on which it is based. But it is not only in the construction of the prime serial row forms that pitch centricity on F can be found. Throughout the entire movement, the only row forms used are the prime form that begins on 5, P5, and its inversion, I5 (there is an instance where a partitioned version of RI5 appears, but this is only briefly as non-tertian triads in the piano while the bass clarinet is repeating I5). Additionally, to completely bolster the movement’s F centricity, the final harmony, an F major triad, is preceded by the only full-fledged iteration of the entire folksong melody in the movement. Beginning in measure 103, the bass clarinet presents the melody in its original key and register, with a short reprise of the final phrase in conjunction with the piano in the last eight measures of the movement.

F centricity, however, is not the primary element of organization in this movement, but rather a result of the folksong melody on which the movement is built being centered on F Dorian. Likely the clearest influence the Cob Malltraeth melody has on the piece, though, is the

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direct correlation to the prime row form, as mentioned above. Not only does the first hexachord of the row fit within the DIA\(^3\) collection\(^6\) that the folksong belongs to, but the ordering of these pitches in the row matches the folksong in order of succession (and often matches in register, as well). Example 1.2 provides an illustration of the initial presentation of the prime form of the row.

**Example 1.2:** *Prime row form derived from Cob Malltraeth Melody*

![Example 1.2](image)

Since such a significant portion of this prime row form is based on the DIA\(^3\) collection, this leaves 5/6 of the remaining pitches in the row as outliers to this collection. This second discreet hexachord, does not, however, fit within another diatonic collection, as one might expect. The two hexachords are, thus, Z-related, maintaining the same interval vector. This results in a row whose second half does not quite as strongly resemble the folksong melody on which it is based, but Gabriel is successful in maintaining the character of the melody, to a certain degree. This is most apparent in the last four pitches of the row, B-flat, A, B-natural, and F-sharp, which bear a strong resemblance to the last five pitches of the Cob Malltraeth melody, B-flat, A-flat, B-flat, G, and F. If one excludes the penultimate note in the melody, G, the B-flat is an exact match between the row and the melody, with the remaining three pitches in the row being a transposition by one half-step of their counterparts in the melody (effectively sounding as though the row were the melody, ending in the key of F-sharp Dorian, rather than F Dorian).

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\(^6\) Referential collection labeling conventions are taken from Adrian P. Childs, “Scalar Referential Collections,” unpublished course notes, 2008.
It is of interest to note, at this point, that as has previously been mentioned, the only
permutations of his serial row that Gabriel uses in this movement are the prime and inverted
rows that begin on 5 (F). If one were to apply a similar inversional process ($I_{10}$) to the F Dorian,
DIA$^{-3}$ collection to which the Cob Malltraeth melody belongs, placing the inversional axis on
scale degree one (F), this would result in the collection mapping onto itself, thus creating an
identical F Dorian, DIA$^{-3}$ collection. While the diatonic collection will map onto another diatonic
collection upon any degree of inversion, it is only the Dorian mode that will map onto itself
when an inversional axis is placed on scale degree one (when the axis is placed on scale degree
one in other diatonic modes, Ionian/Major and Phrygian map onto one another, Lydian and
Locrian map onto one another, and Mixolydian and Aeolian/Natural Minor map onto one
another). Gabriel has thus created a very striking similarity between the folksong melody and his
implementation of the derivative serial row. Not only do both P5 and I5 begin on F, but the first
discreet hexachord of I5, just as is the case with P5, maintains its relationship to the melody by
remaining a subset of the DIA$^{-3}$ collection.

In a like fashion to other relationships Gabriel has created between Cob Malltraeth and
his folksong derived row, when Gabriel presents the P5 and I5 rows, they are most often repeated
multiple times consecutively, often with no break. In fact, the only exception to this is in the bass
clarinet (mm. 95-100), just before it presents the original Cob Malltraeth melody in its entirety.
This technique would seem to draw its inspiration from the nature of folksong melodies in
general, with the typical length of the melody being such that repetition is very much the norm,
often with many verses of text set to the tune.
In fact, the large scale formal structure of the movement can generally be divided into three segments, based chiefly on which row form is being used. For approximately the first 37 measures, P5 and the Cob Malltraeth melody control the entirety of the melodic and harmonic content. Measures 38 through 94 are built to a high degree upon I5, though the row does not as stolidly control the content in this section, with P5 making brief appearances (once, the two rows even run their course simultaneously, with I5 in the piano left hand and P5 in the right). P5 regains control briefly, as mentioned above, just before the folksong melody is presented in the bass clarinet at the end of the movement.

Due to the somewhat schizophrenic nature of the movement being written in a mostly serial style but based on a diatonic melody, there are moments in the movement that are not entirely serial, nor are they entirely diatonic. The serial row is often presented with one of two harmonic elements underpinning the row, with these two elements eventually combining to form one very interesting sound near the end of the movement. The first of these two harmonic elements is used in several instances throughout the movement, and consists of chords in the piano that are sometimes triadic, but at other times contain up to eight simultaneous pitches. Regardless of their size, these chords are not tertian, but have a very dissonant quality. Each time these occur, though not ordered serially, all twelve pitch classes are present, and are not repeated, creating a sound that is very much like the serialism that is present throughout the piece.

In contrast to this, the second harmonic element Gabriel uses is the more occasional occurrences of tertian, often major or minor, harmonies. These harmonies do not follow the typical rules of functional harmony, but do represent the diatonic nature of the melody, with the inherent prevalence of the major and minor third in this collection.
These two elements are combined at measure 78 of the movement, where the piano successively plays A Major, B-flat Major, and C Minor triads repeatedly in quick succession in the right hand. These three chords, which do not share any common tones, create a sonic palate that, of the twelve available pitch classes, lacks only three. These three pitch classes, B, G-sharp, and F-sharp, are present in the left hand of the piano, however. This combination of tertian harmonies with rapidly repeating twelve tone segments seems to be a very apt way of combining diatonic elements with the serialism that plays such a large part in the movement.

**The second movement: II. Allegretto giocoso**

The second movement, in contrast to the first, deals much less with serialism. While there are a few instances where all twelve tones are presented in a row, Gabriel does little to develop this aspect of the movement. Instead, he focuses on the diatonic nature of the melody, combining this with a harmonic language that, for the most part, consists of recurring, 3-5 note simultaneities in the piano.

**Example 1.3: Can y Cathreinwr melody**

The movement opens with the melody Can y Cathreinwr (The Ox-Driver’s Song) (Example 1.3) in the right hand of the piano without any accompaniment. In his notes on the melody, Gabriel explains that he recorded this tune in September of 1953, being sung by “an informant (b. 1865) who had himself sung such stanzas whilst helping to drive ploughing oxen at
nearby Doghill Farm, Dyffryn, around 1878. This “informant,” who was advanced in years at the time of recording, would have probably been one of only a few old-timers to remember singing these tunes while driving oxen, since Gabriel goes on to explain that this was one of the last remaining areas of Wales to use oxen for plowing, and even this was only until about 1880.

There are several instances in this movement of interesting connections that Gabriel has made between serial or non-serial atonal elements and the diatonically based folksong melody. After the initial presentation of the theme in the piano, the bass clarinet begins a somewhat disjointed, leaping variant on the melody, with three-note chords in the piano interspersed between snippets of melody in the bass clarinet. Gabriel here begins setting up a pattern of harmonic language that he uses throughout the movement. The first instance of this harmonic language appears in measure 10, and is a triad that belongs to the set class [014], as does the next interjection in measure 11. This set often appears either as a half step and a major-third above the bass note or a minor sixth and major seventh above the bass note, but does occasionally appear in other forms. While this is the most commonly occurring set in the movement, it interestingly cannot be produced as a subset of the original melody, which belongs to set class [013568]. It is also interesting to note at this point that this melody, while very diatonic in nature, does not represent a full diatonic set ([013568t]), thus leaving the possibility that, were the missing note not the expected completion of the diatonic set, [014] would become a possible subset. Of course, this is merely speculation as to what this missing note could be, if one were even to consider the collection as having a missing note, rather than just as the [013568] set that it is.

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7 Gabriel, *Sonate für Bassklarinette und Klavier*. 
Two other sets that appear frequently and under similar circumstances are [025] and [024]. The first appearance of a full twelve tone row comes in measures 18 and 19, with three groupings of consecutive scalar passages that each, themselves, fit within different diatonic collections (Example 1.4). Although there are multiple options for each of these, they would probably fit best with DIA\(^0\), DIA\(^{-5}\), and DIA\(^{+3}\), respectively.

**Example 1.4: Prime row form from Can y Cathreinwr**

![Example 1.4: Prime row form from Can y Cathreinwr](image)

The melody is again presented in the left hand of the piano starting in measure 23, this time changing keys every two measures, but with a sustained E and B-flat [06] set in the right hand being repeated with two sixteenths every offbeat at the eighth note level. A new grouping of harmonies appears again in the piano just a few bars after this, though. With this occurrence, the bass clarinet again is playing variants of the folksong melody with the right hand of the piano alternating between two sets, [0148] and [01369], each appearing with the same pitches every time. These are spelled in the piano with close spacing from lowest to highest as B, D-sharp, F-sharp, and G for the [0148] collection and A-sharp, C-sharp, E, G, and A-flat with the [01369] collection. Meanwhile, the left hand of the piano maintains movement in fourths and fifths throughout this section, again providing further reference to the nearly diatonic elements of the folksong melody.

Immediately following this section, Gabriel again brings back references to the folksong melody with a section of staccato melodic fragments in the original key of the folksong melody in measure 52. This melody, while not an exact iteration of the folksong melody, does bear a
strong resemblance to the melody, only now there are no passing or other non-chord tones, but rather, an arpeggiation of the tonic and dominant triads that could very well support the original folksong melody. These fragments are presented in a new format, however, with the right hand of the piano beginning, and the left hand performing an exact imitation one quarter note’s duration later. The bass clarinet joins in on the imitation in measure 59, now repeating two quarter notes after the left hand of the piano.

Gabriel then briefly returns to the scalar material that was originally presented serially, and here again there is a pattern of three groups of four notes in scalar motion, though now descending, that represent all twelve pitch classes. With this occurrence, the row form used is a partitioned form of I2 or RI2, with each grouping of four pitches being a discreet tetra-chord from the I2/RI2 row. This serial moment is again brief, however, lasting only about a measure and a half, with repetitions of the last two groupings of four pitches in the piano for the next two measures and a similar pattern in the bass clarinet over the same span of time.

The movement ends, then, with a reiteration of the same [0148] set as used previously, now repeated incessantly in the piano every eighth note with fragments of the Can y Cathreinwr folksong melody appearing in the bass clarinet above. In measure 75, the [014], [024], and [025] triads return in the left hand of the piano, before a final scalar descent in the bass clarinet alone that represents all of the pitches included in the original folksong melody and the [013568], almost-diatonic set, and ending on a concert G, the key in which the folksong melody originally appears.
Although this second movement uses serialism only very sparsely, the effect, combined with the use of non-tertian harmonies, especially the previously mentioned triads belonging to set classes [014], [024], and [025], is similar to the first movement, conceptually, though the effect is markedly different. While the folksong melody predominates much more of the texture in this movement, and the overall sonic picture is much less atonal, a sense that the folksong melody has been taken from the comfortable realm of diatonicism (or near diatonicism in this case, at least) and paired with non-diatonic elements to create a much more novel sound is still very much present.

Example 1.5: Galarnad Cwch Enlli melody

The third movement: III. mesto

In the third movement, Gabriel has provided a setting of the folksong melody Galarnad Cwch Enlli (Example 1.5) that is much more similar to his setting of Cob Malltraeth in the first movement. Galarnad Cwch Enlli, or The Bardset Boat Lament is a slow, mournful tune in the mode of C Dorian. Gabriel notes that the tune was recorded in October of 1964 at Aberdaron, Caernarvonshire, but makes no mention of the singer. Gabriel explains the text of the folksong as
follows: “The song is a lament for six people drowned on the last day of November 1822, when the local boat ‘Supply’ sank near Bardsey Island, some four miles out from Aberdaron. The first part stirringly recounts the journey and accident; the remainder moralises upon the tragedy as a fulfilment [sic] of Divine ordinance and mourns each of the dead in turn, before closing with a prayer.” Gabriel also notes the author of this tune (incidentally the only one of the six folksong melodies included in the piece for which he does so) as Evan Pritchard (1769-1832).

**Example 1.6: Prime row form from Galarnad Cwch Enlli**

![Prime row form from Galarnad Cwch Enlli](image)

This third movement, marked mesto (quarter note equals ca. 60), begins immediately with a presentation of the row form upon which much of the rest of the movement is based (Example 1.6). Much like the first and second movements, however, this material is immediately countered by a long stretch of material that is completely diatonic. This section, measures 6-15, sets up a procedure that Gabriel will follow throughout much of the rest of movement. Although these ten measures contain material that belongs to the DIA\(^2\) collection without any outliers, the tertian harmonies used in this section are not in keeping with the typical roles of functional harmony. This lends a sound to this section of diatonicism, without any progression of tension and resolution, but more of a diatonic wash. While this material is being presented in the piano,

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\(^8\) Gabriel, *Sonate fur Bassklarinette und Klavier*. 
the bass clarinet presents, for the first time, the Galarnad Cwch Enlli folksong melody. Gabriel has written this material in the mode of E Dorian, the same DIA\textsuperscript{+2} collection as the harmonies in the piano.

A return of the original P2 serial row in measure 15, though, signals an end, at least momentarily, to this diatonic material. It is these abrupt changes in texture from diatonic to serial elements (and from serial to diatonic) that seems to characterize this third movement more than any of the others. This first repetition, which occurs in the bass clarinet, is quickly taken over by the piano in measure 18, with different parts of the same row playing out simultaneously in the left and right hands of the piano, but Gabriel again reasserts diatonicism in measure 25, now with a few outliers to the DIA\textsuperscript{+2} collection that add to the feeling of uncertainty about the piece’s tonality, or lack thereof. All the while, the bass clarinet continues to assert the diatonic folksong melody in various fragments, venturing away, however, from the original E Dorian mode a few bars later.

This is a trick that Gabriel continues to play with the listener when, in measure 39, he begins a sequence of ascending perfect fourths in the bass clarinet, an interval that tends to upset any feeling of pitch centricity. This is countered with a few fragments of diatonic, non-functional harmonies in the piano as the bass clarinet reverses the pattern of ascending fourths and begins a pattern of alternating descending thirds and ascending seconds. This pattern breaks, though, when the bass clarinet arrives on a concert E, again asserting this pitch as the “key” of the piece, even though the surrounding material gives a very different impression.
Gabriel now begins using another new technique. With the bass clarinet repeating the concert E over and over, the right hand of the piano plays the Galarnad Cwch Enlli melody in octaves in the right hand, while the left hand of the piano plays mostly major triads in open spacing. These triads are completely unrelated one to another or to the melody, but simply move in ascending whole and half steps starting on E-flat Major, through E Major, F-sharp Major, A-flat Major, A Major, and B Minor. Gabriel maintains this somewhat diatonic, modal soundscape with the bass clarinet taking over the melody after the last piano chord (the bass clarinet has still been repeating the concert E this whole time) while the piano continues with now somewhat more dissonant harmonies.

Giving very clear reference to tonality, however, the following section is a quasi-cadenza in the bass clarinet that fits almost entirely within the DIA\(^2\) collection of the folksong melody, while the piano maintains alternating tertian and quartal harmonies over a pedal in the bass of B. This seems very fitting, as this section precedes the return of the ascending fourths, now in the piano, as well as the thirds progression that had both been seen previously in the bass clarinet. In terms of overall form, the quasi-cadenza section could then be seen as the end of a development, and the fourths as somewhat of a recapitulation, if this were to be compared to a sonata form. A pedal B in the piano lends credence to this postulation, as this is scale degree five in the key center that Gabriel has set up of E Dorian, which hints at a dominant function.

This concept of recapitulation is furthered by a return of the material first seen in measure 46, where the bass clarinet was repeating a concert E over and over while the piano played the folksong melody. Now, in measure 85, the right hand of the piano is repeating the E in octaves, while the bass clarinet plays the melody, again in E Dorian. The piano and bass clarinet now switch roles in measure 90, with the bass clarinet sustaining a concert E while the piano plays the
melody. This continues until the bass clarinet takes off on its own presentation of the row form P2, with the repeated concert E interspersed throughout. All the while, the right hand of the piano continues to play the melody while the left plays mostly diatonic, non-functional tertian harmonies. The bass clarinet finally returns to the melody to end the piece while the piano returns to the repeated E, ending the movement with a clear centricity around E.

All of these instances of interaction between diatonic elements and chromatic and serial elements provide a very intriguing and haunting experience. When one considers the nature of the text upon which this tune is based, the idea of unstable harmonic footing seems very appropriate. Not only is the song a tale of lost lives at sea, but also a cautionary tale, and one that is intended to cause feelings of sadness and uneasiness in the listener. Gabriel, perhaps more here than in any other movement, has taken the combination of diatonic folksong melody and serialism to an extreme, yet very satisfying end.

It is also interesting to note that, unlike the first two movements, the only row form used in the entirety of the third movement was the initial P2 row form. This is not a far cry, however, form Gabriel’s use of rows in the first and second movements, in that he limits himself to only a few of the possible permutations of the original prime row form. This may also be an ode to the folksong melodies, with very little variation occurring, but rather a repetition, verse after verse, of the same melody.

**The fourth movement: IV. Allegro**

While the third movement holds some of the more stark contrasts between tonal and atonal elements, the fourth movement can certainly be singled out for referring to the most folksong melodies. These melodies, in order of appearance, are Y Cap o Las Fawr; Y Gaseg
Ddu; Si So, Gorniog; and a final return near the very end of the piece to the tune used in the first movement, Cob Malltraeth. Of these melodies, the first, Y Cap o Las Fawr, can be seen as having the most influence on the movement, as the serial row that appears at the beginning of the movement and is derived from this melody controls much of the rest of the movement, even as the other melodies appear.

Y Cap o Las Fawr (The Cap of Broad Lace) was recorded in April of 1959 at Brynsiencyn, Anglesey (Example 1.7). Gabriel has this to say about the tune: “The song revolves around Mary’s predicament over her new lace cap: how to pay for it without her husband finding out. The text also appears as part of the Anglesey song ‘Cob Malltraeth’ and incorporates interpolated nonsensical phrases—a frequent feature in folk songs recorded in Anglesey.”

This last comment of Gabriel’s will be important to take note of, as he often adds brief snippets or even entire presentations of serial rows that are not quite in the correct order between elements that are more identifiable as belonging to some form of the serial row or another tonal element, much like the interpolation of nonsense syllables in the text of the folksong.

Example 1.7: Y Cap o Las Fawr melody

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Example 1.8: *Prime row form from Y Cap o Las Fawr*

The movement begins with a presentation of the serial row, P5 (notice the F centricity from the first movement already making a potential foothold in the last), with a focus especially on the first three notes of the Y Cap o Las Fawr folksong melody. The ascending minor third and major second are here maintained from the melody. It is also interesting to note that, while the folk melody begins on G, whereas the fourth movement begins on F, the bass clarinet presents the first three pitches, which when notated for an instrument pitched in B-flat as the bass clarinet is, these three pitches appear on the page as identical to the first three pitches in the melody. This seems to be a sign post from Gabriel, directing attention to the direct quotation from the melody.

Example 1.9: *Partitioned form of P5*

After a few repetitions of this row (Gabriel seems to be fond of repeating a single row several times before moving on) a new presentation of the same row occurs in measure 5 in the right hand of the piano, with four triads, one right after the other, presenting the row with every
other member of the row being present. This can be seen by comparing the initial row (Example 1.8) with Example 1.9. The row then continues on in its previous P5 form for several more measures uninterrupted.

The end of these presentations is paired with the first occurrence of a motive that Gabriel will bring back several times throughout the movement (Example 1.10). This is a brief interlude before Gabriel presents a new form of the row with the retrograde of the original row spilling back into several more iterations of P5 a few measures later. To contrast these serial elements that have been the predominant elements thus far, new, more melodic material is presented in the bass clarinet while the piano presents several chords that represent the complete array of all twelve available pitches in very short spans of time without actually quoting any forms of the original serial row. This moment of clashing tonality and atonality is short lived, however, because Gabriel is now ready, after only 30 measures, to present the next melody.

**Example 1.10: Bass clarinet in measures 8-10**

Y Gaseg Ddu (Example 1.11), translated as The Black Mare, is a song that was “…especially popular in southwest Wales [which] frivolously recounts the tale of the black mare, bought for a pound at Henfeddau fair, which expired from overfeeding, leaving its owner penniless but local crows and magpies delighted. Appended as a final stanza is ‘the ballad’
pedlar’s traditional formularized appeal for money—the finance in this case being essential in order to acquire another mare.”\textsuperscript{10} Gabriel also notes that this tune was recorded in November of 1961 at “Llaneitho, near Tregaron, Cardiganshire.”\textsuperscript{11}

This melody is presented in a highly diatonic, tonal fashion, with the only dissonances at the outset being a major ninth in the repeating accompaniment pattern the piano presents at measure 31. However, after the bass clarinet presents the first phrase of the galloping melody, the right hand of the piano takes a moment on its own to present a slightly skewed version of the row P6 before immediately returning to the light accompaniment figure from before, now moved up a major third. This is again interrupted after only one phrase by a variant of P9 in the right hand of the piano, again with nothing else happening while the row runs its course in rapid eighth notes. At its conclusion, though, the piano and bass clarinet are allowed to run their course in almost unadulterated tonal bliss, with the bass clarinet presenting most of the cheery Y Gaseg Ddu melody before another fragmented form of the row is presented, starting in measure 55.

\textbf{Example 1.11: Y Gaseg Ddu melody}

\footnotesize
\begin{music}
\musicpage{5}
\begin{music}
\end{music}
\end{musicpage}
\begin{music}
\musicpage{9}
\begin{music}
\end{music}
\end{musicpage}
\end{music}

\textsuperscript{10} Gabriel, \textit{Sonate fur Bassklarinette und Klavier.} \\
\textsuperscript{11} Gabriel, \textit{Sonate fur Bassklarinette und Klavier.}
This procedure continues for quite some time, with the bass clarinet performing large chunks of uninterrupted melody with mostly tonal accompaniment before a wholesale return to serialism begins with the bass clarinet in measure 71. The right and left hand independently imitate this somewhat unordered version of P9 before the bass clarinet takes off alone with several more repetitions. When it finally arrives at a resting point on a low E-flat, however, the piano takes over with a flurry of continuous presentations of I5 and P5 row forms, with the bass clarinet later joining back in. This is one of the longest stretches in the entire movement (probably the entire piece) of continuous presentations of complete serial rows, one after the other with little to no interruption. This span lasts from the bass clarinet’s diluted P9 row in measure 71 to the end of measure 98—over two whole pages of the score. Fragments of row forms and even a few complete forms continue, however, for another page and a half (20 measures) before a figure similar to Example 1.10 signals the end of this section and the arrival of the next folksong melody.

**Example 1.12: Si So, Gorniog melody**

![Example 1.12](Si So, Gorniog melody)

Si So, Gorniog (See-Saw, Swaddled One) was recorded on April 18, 1963, near Dolgellau, Merioneth (Example 1.12). “A rocking-song learnt from his mother by the singer (b. 1890) when he was a little boy. Text: 1. See-Saw, swaddled one, earning three pence;/A penny for me and a penny for you/and a penny for Sion (John) for lending the saw. 2. See-Saw,
swaddled one, catching three hares:/Eighteen (pence) for me and eighteen for you/And eighteen for Twm (Tom) for lending the dog. Sawing imagery is met with in several Welsh nursery rhymes.”

Gabriel presents this melody at first in the bass clarinet in its entirety, accompanied by a series of descending scalar runs in the piano, perhaps providing some imagery of see-sawing. After this first presentation, the left hand of the piano accompanies fragmentary portions of the melody in the right hand and bass clarinet with ascending leaps of fourths and fifths, again mixing elements of tonality and atonality, with non-diatonic elements very much present in the right hand of the piano and a clash between the left hand of the piano and the melodic material being presented elsewhere in the texture.

Gabriel then presents the melody again in the bass clarinet, now in what is probably its most tonal form, with the piano giving a quick waltz-like down-up-up backing, though even at this point, tonality is still somewhat diluted. This doesn’t last very long, though, as a sequential pattern is formed based on the Si So, Gorniog melody, again with ascending fourths and fifths in the bass, not all of which are perfect, upsetting the previous sense of tonality. This is then followed by extended, non-diatonic scalar passages with occasional fragmented row forms reappearing, particularly in the piano at measure 184 and the piano and bass clarinet in measures 199–209. Fragments of tonality and disordered rows continue to appear for much of this last section, with occasional short quotations of the Si So, Gorniog and Y Gaseg Ddu melodies interspersed throughout.

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This leads to the return, in measure 258, of the Cob Malltraeth melody from the first movement. Although the melody does not appear in its entirety, the similarities between the prime row forms of the first and last movements allow the first few notes of the Cob Malltraeth melody to appear and lead into a P form and an R form of the Y Cap o Las Fawr row. After a few repetitions of some non-diatonic chords and another repetition of the P5 row form, scalar passages made up of snippets of diatonic and whole tone scales lead to the final reiteration of the motive from Example 1.10.

**Conclusions**

Through the use of subsets of individual melodies, Gabriel has created recurring thematic material, especially in the form of serial rows that drive the music in each of the movements. It is especially interesting to note, though, that the use of possible permutations of the serial row are very minimal, with the first movement using only three of the 48 row forms that can be derived from the first, the second movement only using a serial row in its entirety twice, the third movement using only one row form over and over, and the fourth movement venturing the farthest but still only using a few row forms.

Gabriel uses this limitation in row forms, though, to keep the ear from wandering too far from the ever present tonal areas upon which the piece is based. The fact that each of the movements has a clear tonal center is due in large part, in fact, to the limited use of row forms and the constant exchange of these serial elements with the non-serial, diatonic elements and folksong melodies.
As a whole, some of the most interesting relationships in the piece are the interactions between tonal/diatonic and atonal/serial elements. Gabriel’s use of serial rows to contrast the tonal and diatonic elements of the folksong melodies is prevalent throughout all four movements of the piece. It is somewhat unusual to see such an amalgamation, but in this case, the combination proves to be both beautiful and intriguing.
CHAPTER TWO: PERFORMANCE PRACTICE

Wolfgang Gabriel’s *Sonate fur Bassklarinette und Klavier* presents a very unique and interesting challenge for the performer, with a high degree of musicality and technical prowess required for the performance to be successful. Since the typical bass clarinetist is also a clarinetist, or at least began their career as a clarinetist, it is often helpful to associate and compare the demands of playing the bass clarinet with those of playing the soprano clarinet. In this piece, specifically, the most pertinent considerations will be those regarding the altissimo register, since the range of the bass clarinet in this piece (in terms of written notation, rather than sounding) exceeds—in the altissimo register—that of most pieces written for the soprano clarinet.

The extreme altissimo register has been explored by a few bass clarinetists in the past 50-55 years of the instrument’s development as composers have begun writing more challenging and avant-garde works for the instrument that explore the furthest reaches of its capabilities. Of course, as an auxiliary member of the clarinet family, the bass clarinet does not draw as many specialists as the somewhat more manageable soprano clarinet. This has led to a seeming lack in pedagogical information on the instrument, especially in regards to playing in this higher register.

**Challenges in the altissimo register**

Of course, when approaching the bass clarinet, as a clarinetist of any level, there are certain challenges involved in beginning to feel comfortable with the instrument. From larger keys and the lack of open tone holes, to the necessities of a larger instrument requiring greater air
support, there are many adjustments that must be made. Probably the most notable of these, however, is the amended embouchure that is required for clear tone production throughout the range of the instrument, especially in the throat tone register (approximately written G$_4^{13}$ through B-flat$_4$) and the altissimo register (approximately above written A$_5$).

While the opening of the mouth that is required to accommodate the larger bass clarinet mouthpiece is obviously larger, this does not account for the changes that are necessary to play the instrument well. Only opening the mouth slightly to accommodate the larger mouthpiece will prove insufficient in developing a clear and controlled tone, although this seems to be a very common mistake made by many clarinetists turned bass clarinetists.

Only creating this slight increase in the aperture of the lips with no other adjustments tends to create one of two plights among novice bass clarinetists, or sometimes a combination of both, as has been observed by this writer in many a bass clarinet lesson or in the rehearsal or performance hall. The first is a very thin, brittle, narrow sound, resulting most likely from an embouchure that already suffers from a too firm lower lip being even more restrictive on a larger reed, with the player feeling as though the larger reed requires even more subduing than the smaller, soprano clarinet reed. This biting approach tends to cause a lack of projection and an unpleasantly bright tone, with little of the characteristic depth and warmth often associated with the bass clarinet.

The second embouchure problem often encountered by the beginning bass clarinetist is an excessive loosening of the lips, again in reaction to the larger mouthpiece. This error seems to occur most often when a clarinetist is playing in the lowest register of the instrument, where an

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$^{13}$ Register indications in this document follow the standard of the Acoustical Society of America, in which middle C is designated as C$_4$. 
overly loud and bombastic sound can be achieved without special being taken to maintain a warm, round, controlled tone. If either of these problems is present in a bass clarinetist’s playing, a successful performance of most any piece will be unlikely, but especially a work with the demands present in the sonata currently under consideration. Probably the most crucial aspect to an effective performance of the piece is, thus, a well-developed embouchure and tone.

If merely increasing the aperture of the mouth to accommodate the larger mouthpiece is not a viable solution, then the question remains as to how to affect this change in one’s playing and how to teach said changes. As was mentioned, before, it can be helpful to compare the requirements for performing on the bass clarinet with those of the soprano clarinet. When playing in the upper register of the soprano clarinet, there a few elements to the embouchure that must be maintained, in addition to the requirements of tongue position, and this clarinetist and bass clarinetist has actually found these to be more similar than one might expect, with the exception of the above comparisons of the size of the mouth opening.

**Embouchure**

When performing as a clarinetist in any register, but especially the upper register, it is important firstly to keep the muscles at the corners of the mouth firm and drawn in toward the sides of the mouthpiece, while at the same time letting the bottom lip relax and become a cushion on which the reed can rest, allowing freer vibration. This can sometimes be counterintuitive, especially to young players, as the tendency as one endeavors higher into the altissimo is to increase the lower lip pressure, thus causing problems with tone, pitch, ease of articulation, and
dynamic range, with the softest and loudest dynamics effectively nonexistent. The same can be said about the bass clarinetist’s embouchure, only now, with the larger mouthpiece, comes an increased need for firm corners and a relaxed lower lip.

This makes sense when one considers the increased surface area of the bass clarinet reed, which results in an increase, consequently, in the surface area of lower lip that is in contact with the reed. To avoid stifling the sound, one must allow free vibration of the reed, but to keep that sound from being too unwieldy, the increased firmness in the corners will aid in overall control. In the upper register of the bass clarinet, this is especially important, as slight changes in the reed’s vibration can cause drastic changes in the production of sound.

Along these lines, an aspect of soprano clarinet embouchure that may not be quite as much an area of focus is the upper lip. While it is important, when playing with a single lip embouchure, to keep the upper lip drawn in slightly toward the top, front teeth and pulled taut against the mouthpiece, this is vitally important when playing the bass clarinet. The overall effect of this, combined with the tightening of the corners of the mouth and relaxation of the lower lip, result in the lips taking on an “ooh” shape.

This is in contrast to the idea of merely opening the embouchure up when playing bass clarinet, since the effect when using the principals mentioned above for attaining a good bass clarinet embouchure will feel, from the perspective of the player, as if they are being required with some parts to increase, and others to actually decrease. The relaxed lower lip a clarinetist uses now requires even more relaxation when playing the bass clarinet, while the firm corners and upper lip required for soprano clarinet performance now require even more attention.
Voicing

There is one more aspect of bass clarinet playing that needs to be addressed before moving on to specific considerations in regards to Gabriel’s sonata. This is the topic of voicing, or the subject of tongue placement—especially in the rear of the mouth—as well as the positioning of the soft palate. Any clarinetist who is not familiar with this terminology will at least be familiar with the feeling inside the mouth associated with a slight change in tongue position when moving from one register to another. Consider, for example, written C4, the note produced when depressing the thumb and first three fingers of the left hand. If the register key is depressed while using this same fingering, a written G5 will result. It is possible, however, to produce the G using the C fingering, without use of the register key. This can be accomplished by slightly raising the soft palate, as if yawning, and raising the back of the tongue toward the roof of the mouth in the same area so that it is now between the upper molars, creating a smaller, more direct channel through which the air must pass (it is important to note that the front-most portion of the tongue will remain in the same position, with the tip of the tongue remaining very near the reed at all times). One can continue this process, moving to higher overtones with this same fingering to achieve a written E6, A6, and beyond, with practice. The standard fingerings for these notes are, in fact, so similar, that this re-voicing to achieve higher pitches is necessary, and probably one of the most common reasons for struggles in the upper register amongst clarinetists.

These same principles hold true for the bass clarinetist, only with this larger instrument, a much greater sensitivity in the placement of the tongue is required in the upper register. As the members of the overtone series get closer to one another—which happens the higher one plays on the instrument—it becomes more difficult to control which one of these overtones will speak
with any given fingering. The higher the bass clarinetist progresses above C6, the more a correct fingering does not guarantee that the desired note will speak. As such, it is highly advantageous for the bass clarinetist, especially at the beginning stages of learning the instrument, to spend a significant amount of time exploring the upper register and incorporating this into long tones, scales, and tonguing exercises.

**Fingerings**

This does not mean, however, that a correct fingering for each note in the bass clarinet’s altissimo register is not vital. As one proceeds higher into this range, however, there are increasing amounts of possible fingerings, with three, four, or more viable fingerings for each note, depending on the environment in which the note occurs. With this in mind, a fingering chart for the upper register of the bass clarinet is provided in Figure 2.1.

The fingerings used in this chart are mainly the result of experimentation on this bass clarinetist’s part. Using the fingerings common on the soprano clarinet as a starting point, these fingerings are mostly developed based on the series of overtones. Since the bass clarinet overblows by a perfect twelfth and then again by a major sixth, with very similar fingerings, this process was continued, experimenting with slight variations to achieve accurate intonation and ease of playability. Some of the lower fingerings listed here are common practice among bass clarinetists, but many may not be known by most clarinetists who have not had much experience with the bass clarinet. Many, though, are original to this fingering chart.

Each of the pitches appearing in the fingering chart has at least two possible fingerings. These are labeled P1 or P2 for Primary fingerings, and A1, A2, etc., for alternate fingerings. The primary fingerings are those that would be used under normal circumstances. The alternates can
be used if the primary fingering is not accessible because the preceding or following material
does not allow the fingers easy access to the primary fingerings or if an alternate fingering allows
more control at soft dynamics or in other similar situations.
Figure 2.1:  
Bass Clarinet Altissimo  
Fingering Chart
Some specific examples and conclusions

As pertains specifically to Gabriel’s *Sonate fur Bassklarinette und Klavier*, there are a few sections in which specific fingerings and techniques should be addressed. While, in most cases, the performer will need to take the time to find which fingerings are most suitable to their specific needs, a few brief recommendations will be helpful.

The first of these instances comes in measures 50-59 of the first movement, where the performer must make sure to take a large enough breath to last for several measures of triplets with a crescendo to a written C7. For this sustained fortissimo high C, the P1 fingering will be the most effective. The highest note of the whole piece, though, appears in measure 88, with a chromatic run from altissimo F-sharp up to C-sharp in thirty-second notes. The fingerings used for this should be A1 for the F-sharp and P1 for the remainder of the ascent. The key with both of these occurrences is to achieve the correct voicing to produce the notes clearly, immediately, and in tune. This will require the tongue to be fairly high in the back of the mouth, while remaining low in the front to accommodate clear articulations.

In the second movement, there are again a few instances which require careful attention to voicing, regardless of which fingerings are to be used. The most prominent example here is in measure 35, with a high A-flat marked staccato and piano, one that will be difficult to produce without correct voicing. Another similar instance is in measures 78 and 79, where an altissimo A is sustained at a pianissimo dynamic. In addition to concerns of voicing, the performer must maintain a relaxed lower lip, while the upper lip will need to be kept taught and pulled against the upper front teeth to keep the note from dropping to an undertone.
The third movement contains one of the more extended passages in the altissimo register, with the quazi-cadenza section beginning in measure 58. Here again, prime fingerings will work well for the most part, but voicing will again be the most important aspect to the successful performance. This is especially true for the last sustained altissimo F-sharp, which will be aided by using the alternate fingering, A1, which speaks and sustains more easily at this soft dynamic of pianissimo.

Altissimo passages abound in the fourth movement, with rapid articulation at several points, which again requires a high tongue position to keep these high pitches from dropping to lower undertones. This is especially true in the passage beginning in measure 67, with articulated sixteenth note altissimo A-flats. Care will also need to be taken in several other altissimo passages in this movement that move at a fast tempo to make certain that fingerings are selected that allow ease of movement, such as in measure 154-160.

These are just a few examples of the demands of this piece, with the main goal here being to point out the need for special care to be taken in precise positioning of the back portion of the tongue (voicing) and in selecting appropriate fingerings from those listed above. While these will vary from performer to performer due to unique characteristics of every instrument and musician, the same basic principals will apply across the board.

Wolfgang Gabriel has here provided the bass clarinet with an exceptional piece of music that provides numerous challenges for the performer, yet is accessible and fulfilling for the musicians and audience members, alike. This is a wonderful example of composition for the bass clarinet that does not unnecessarily avoid the altissimo register, providing further challenges for the performer and a richer palate of musical sound.


APPENDIX: LECTURE RECITAL SCRIPT

“This presentation is based on my document, AN ANALYSIS AND PERFORMANCE CONSIDERATIONS OF WOLFGANG GABRIEL’S *SONATE FUR BASSKLARINETTE UND KLASIER*, OPUS 30. (Begins with a slide showing the title page of my document) The program will begin with a discussion of the piece, followed by a performance to conclude the program.

“I came across this piece last year as I was looking for potential new bass clarinet repertoire, and I was immediately attracted to Gabriel’s style of writing for the bass clarinet, not restricting himself to the lower register as is often done with music written for the bass clarinet, but making free use of the altissimo register (the instrument’s highest register). I was also intrigued, upon further inspection of the piece, to discover that, although each of the four movements is based on Welsh folksong melodies, there is also a high degree of serialism present in the piece.

“First, a little about the composer. Wolfgang Gabriel was born in 1930 in Vienna, Austria and began studying the violin and piano at a young age. He has since studied composition with Alfred Uhl and conducting with Hans Swarovsky. Among his other compositions, several have been written for bass clarinet solo and bass clarinet with piano. This unusual amount of works written for the bass clarinet is due to the influence of the late, renowned bass clarinetist Josef Horák, for whom many original compositions for bass clarinet were written. Horák is even credited with having given the first ever bass clarinet recital in 1955.14

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“My intent with this project is twofold. (Show slide with the following “I. Analytical Considerations. II. Performance Practice) Firstly, I will provide some analytical considerations for the Sonata, specifically in regards to the relationships between the Welsh folksong melodies upon which the piece is based and the serial techniques Gabriel uses in developing these melodies. Secondly, I will discuss performance considerations for the bass clarinetist, focusing on the embouchure, voicing, and fingerings required in the altissimo register of the instrument.

“From an analytical standpoint, Gabriel’s choice of row forms upon which each movement of the piece is built is based to a high degree on the folksong melodies that inspired the composition. The first movement is based on a single tune, Cob Malltraeth. Gabriel recorded this tune as it was sung by a Welsh singer at St. David’s in Pembrokeshire in September of 1963. (Show slide with map highlighting the locations of Pembrokeshire, Llanfachreth, and Malltraeth) The singer learned the song from farmhands in Llanfachreth around 1900, but the original subject is of a town on the island of Anglesey called Malltraeth. About the tune, Gabriel says that “the song, for the most part, sustains a mock-tragic note but this is triumphantly dispelled in the final stanza.”

“This melody is in the mode of F Dorian (minor, with a major sixth scale degree), which is mirrored in the first movement as a whole. The entire first movement, in fact, has a clear pitch center of F, despite its largely serial nature. This is established from the outset, with the initial prime form of Gabriel’s serial row, P5, bearing a remarkable resemblance to the melody on which it is based. But it is not only in the construction of the prime serial row forms that pitch centricity on F can be found. Throughout the entire movement, the only row forms used are the

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prime form that begins on 5, P5, and its inversion, I5. Additionally, to completely bolster the
movement’s F centricity, the final harmony, an F major triad, is preceded by the only full-
feldged iteration of the entire folksong melody in the movement.

“Likely the clearest influence the Cob Malltraeth melody has on the piece, though, is the
direct correlation to the prime row form, as I mentioned a moment ago. Not only does the first
hexachord of the row fit within the DIA$^3$ collection that the folksong belongs to, but the ordering
of these pitches in the row matches the folksong in order of succession (and often matches in
register, as well). This can be seen and heard very clearly when comparing the folksong melody
side by side with the initial P5 form of the row.

(Slide with Cob Malltraeth Melody and P5 row form, examples 1.1 and 1.2 from document)

“What you see on the projector is the Cob Malltraeth Melody, and below that is the full
P5 row form that begins the piece. Take note of the correspondence of the first six pitches in the
row to the F, A-flat, G, C, D, and E-flat in the first 3 measures of the folksong melody. I will
demonstrate first the melody, then the P5 row form.

(Play Cob Malltraeth Melody and P5 row form on bass clarinet)

“It is of interest to note, at this point, that as has previously been mentioned, the only
permutations of his serial row that Gabriel uses in this movement are the prime and inverted
rows that begin on 5 (F). If one were to apply a similar inversional process ($I_{10}$) to the F Dorian,
DIA$^3$ collection to which the Cob Malltraeth melody belongs, placing the inversional axis on
scale degree one (F), this would result in the collection mapping onto itself, thus creating an
identical F Dorian, DIA$^3$ collection. (Project pitch wheel and demonstrate inversional
symmetry of the DIA$^3$ collection at $I_{10}$) While the diatonic collection will map onto another
diatonic collection upon any degree of inversion, it is only the Dorian mode that will map onto
itself when an inversional axis is placed through scale degree one. Gabriel has thus created a very striking similarity between the folksong melody and his implementation of the derivative serial row. Not only do both P5 and I5 begin on F, but the first discreet hexachord of I5, just as is the case with P5, maintains its relationship to the melody by remaining a subset of the DIA\textsuperscript{-3} collection.

“...The large scale formal structure of the movement can generally be divided into three segments, based chiefly on which row form is being used. For approximately the first 37 measures, P5 and the Cob Malltraeth melody control the entirety of the melodic and harmonic content. Measures 38 through 94 are built to a high degree upon I5, though the row does not as stolidly control the content in this section, with P5 making brief appearances (once, the two rows even run their course simultaneously, with I5 in the piano left hand and P5 in the right). P5 regains control briefly, as mentioned before, just before the folksong melody is presented in the bass clarinet at the end of the movement.

“...Due to the somewhat schizophrenic nature of the movement being written in a mostly serial style but based on a diatonic melody, there are moments in the movement that are not entirely serial, nor are they entirely diatonic. The serial row is often presented with one of two harmonic elements underpinning the row, with these two elements eventually combining to form one very interesting sound near the end of the movement. The first of these two harmonic elements is used in several instances throughout the movement, and consists of chords in the piano that are sometimes triadic, but at other times contain up to eight simultaneous pitches. Regardless of their size, these chords are not tertian, but have a very dissonant quality. Each time these occur, though not ordered serially, all twelve pitch classes are present, and are not repeated, creating a sound that is very much like the serialism that is present throughout the piece.
“In contrast to this, the second harmonic element Gabriel uses is the more occasional occurrences of tertian, often major or minor, harmonies. These harmonies do not follow the typical rules of functional harmony, but do represent the diatonic nature of the melody, with the inherent prevalence of the major and minor third in this collection.

*(Show slide of piano in mm. 78-89)*

“These two elements are combined at measure 78, where the piano successively plays A Major, B-flat Major, and C Minor triads repeatedly in quick succession in the right hand. These three chords, which do not share any common tones, create a sonic palate that, of the twelve available pitch classes, lacks only three. These three pitch classes, B, G-sharp, and F-sharp, are present in the left hand of the piano, however. This combination of tertian harmonies with rapidly repeating twelve tone segments seems to be a very apt way of combining diatonic elements with the serialism that plays such a large part in the movement.

“The second movement, in contrast to the first, deals much less with serialism. While there are a few instances where all twelve tones are presented in a row, Gabriel does little to develop this aspect of the movement. Instead, he focuses on the diatonic nature of the melody, combining this with a harmonic language that, for the most part, consists of recurring, 3-5 note simultaneities in the piano.

“The movement opens with the melody Can y Cathreinwr (The Ox-Driver’s Song) in the right hand of the piano without any accompaniment. In his notes on the melody, Gabriel explains that he recorded this tune in September of 1953, being sung by ‘an informant (b. 1865) who had himself sung such stanzas whilst helping to drive ploughing oxen at nearby Doghill Farm,
Dyffryn, around 1878.\textsuperscript{16} (Show slide with map of Dyffryn, Wales) This ‘informant,’ who was advanced in years at the time of recording, would have probably been one of only a few old-timers to remember singing these tunes while driving oxen, since Gabriel goes on to explain that this was one of the last remaining areas of Wales to use oxen for plowing, and even this was only until about 1880.

This melody is a much lighter, more cheerful melody than the Cob Malltraeth melody from the first movement, which is reflected in the derived row form, although this row is used very sparingly in the movement; only twice.

(Show slide of Can y Cathreinwr melody and derived row, examples 1.3 and 1.4 from document, and play each, respectively)

“There are several instances in this movement of interesting connections that Gabriel has made between serial or non-serial atonal elements and the diatonically based folksong melody. After the initial presentation of the theme in the piano, the bass clarinet begins a somewhat disjointed, leaping variant on the melody, with three-note chords in the piano interspersed between snippets of melody in the bass clarinet. (Show slide of first page of the second movement) Gabriel here begins setting up a pattern of harmonic language that he uses throughout the movement. The first instance of this harmonic language appears in measure 10, and is a triad that belongs to the set class [014].

“Immediately following this section, Gabriel again brings back references to the folksong melody with a section of staccato melodic fragments in the original key of the folksong melody. This melody, while not an exact iteration of the folksong melody, does bear a strong resemblance to the melody, only now there are no passing or other non-chord tones, but rather,

\textsuperscript{16} Gabriel, \textit{Sonate fur Bassklarinette und Klavier}.
an arpeggiation of the tonic and dominant triads that could very well support the original folksong melody. These fragments are presented in a new format, however, with the right hand of the piano beginning, and the left hand performing an exact imitation one quarter note’s duration later. The bass clarinet then joins in on the imitation, now beginning the imitation a full measure later.

“Although this second movement uses serialism only very sparsely, the effect, combined with the use of non-tertian harmonies, especially the previously mentioned triads belonging to set classes [014], [024], and [025], is similar to the first movement, conceptually, though the effect is markedly different. While the folksong melody predominates much more of the texture in this movement, and the overall sonic picture is much less atonal, a sense that the folksong melody has been taken from the comfortable realm of diatonicism (or near diatonicism in this case, at least) and paired with non-diatonic elements to create a much more novel sound is still very much present.

“In the third movement, Gabriel has provided a setting of the folksong melody Galarnad Cwch Enlli that is much more similar to his setting of Cob Malltraeth in the first movement. Galarnad Cwch Enllie, or The Bardset Boat Lament is a slow, mournful tune in the mode of C Dorian. Gabriel notes that the tune was recorded in October of 1964 at Aberdaron, Caernarvonshire, but makes no mention of the singer. (Show slide of map of Aberdaron Caernarvonshire) Gabriel explains the text of the folksong as follows: ‘The song is a lament for six people drowned on the last day of November 1822, when the local boat “Supply” sank near
Bardsey Island, some four miles out from Aberdaron. The first part stirringly recounts the journey and accident; the remainder moralises upon the tragedy as a fulfilment [sic] of Divine ordinance and mourns each of the dead in turn, before closing with a prayer.\footnote{17}

“This third movement, marked mesto (quarter note equals ca. 60), begins immediately with a presentation of the row form upon which much of the rest of the movement is based. Much like the first and second movements, however, this material is immediately countered by a long stretch of material that is completely diatonic. This sets up a procedure that Gabriel will follow throughout much of the rest of movement. Although these ten measures contain material that belongs to the DIA\textsuperscript{+2} collection without any outliers, the tertian harmonies used in this section are not in keeping with the typical roles of functional harmony. This lends a sound to this section of diatonicism, without any progression of tension and resolution, but more of a diatonic wash. While this material is being presented in the piano, the bass clarinet presents, for the first time, the folksong melody. Gabriel has written this material in the mode of E Dorian, the same DIA\textsuperscript{+2} collection as the harmonies in the piano.

(Show slide of Galarnad Cwch Enlli melody and derived row, and demonstrate each on bass clarinet)

“A return of the original P2 serial row a few measures later, though, signals an end to this diatonic material. It is these abrupt changes in texture from diatonic to serial elements (and from serial to diatonic) that seems to characterize this third movement more than any of the others. Gabriel again reasserts diatonicism after about ten bars, now with a few outliers to the DIA\textsuperscript{+2} collection that add to the feeling of uncertainty about the piece’s tonality, or lack thereof. All the while, the bass clarinet continues to assert the diatonic folksong melody in various fragments, venturing away, however, from the original E Dorian mode a few bars later.

\footnote{17} Gabriel, \textit{Sonate fur Bassklarinette und Klavier}. 
“This is a trick that Gabriel continues to play with the listener when he begins a sequence of ascending perfect fourths in the bass clarinet, an interval that tends to upset any feeling of pitch centricity. This is countered with a few fragments of diatonic, non-functional harmonies in the piano as the bass clarinet reverses the pattern of ascending fourths and begins a pattern of alternating descending thirds and ascending seconds. This pattern breaks, though, when the bass clarinet arrives on a concert E, again asserting this pitch as the “key” of the piece, even though the surrounding material gives a very different impression.

“Gabriel now begins using another technique. With the bass clarinet repeating the concert E over and over, the right hand of the piano plays the folksong melody in octaves in the right hand, while the left hand of the piano plays mostly major triads in open spacing. These triads are completely unrelated one to another or to the melody, but simply move in ascending whole and half steps starting on E-flat Major, through E Major, F-sharp Major, A-flat Major, A Major, and B Minor. Gabriel maintains this somewhat diatonic, modal soundscape with the bass clarinet taking over the melody after the last piano chord (the bass clarinet has still been repeating the concert E this whole time) while the piano continues with now somewhat more dissonant harmonies.

“Giving very clear reference to tonality, however, the following section is a quasi-cadenza in the bass clarinet that fits almost entirely within the DIA$^{+2}$ collection of the folksong melody, while the piano maintains alternating tertian and quartal harmonies over a B pedal in the left hand. This seems very fitting, as this section precedes the return of the ascending fourths, now in the piano, as well as the thirds progression that had both been seen previously in the bass clarinet. In terms of overall form, the quasi-cadenza section could then be seen as the end of a
development, and the fourths as somewhat of a recapitulation, if this were to be compared to a sonata form. A pedal B in the piano lends credence to this postulation, as this is scale degree five in the key center that Gabriel has set up of E Dorian, which hints at a dominant function.

“All of these instances of interaction between diatonic elements and chromatic and serial elements provide a very intriguing and haunting experience. When one considers the nature of the text upon which this tune is based, the idea of unstable harmonic footing seems very appropriate. Not only is the song a tale of lost lives at sea, but also a cautionary tale, and one that is intended to cause feelings of sadness and uneasiness in the listener. Gabriel, perhaps more here than in any other movement, has taken the combination of diatonic folksong melody and serialism to an extreme, yet very satisfying end.

“While the third movement holds some of the more stark contrasts between tonal and atonal elements, the fourth movement can certainly be singled out for referring to the most folksong melodies. These melodies, in order of appearance, are Y Cap o Las Fawr; Y Gaseg Ddu; Si So, Gorniog; and a final return near the very end of the piece to the tune used in the first movement, Cob Malltraeth.

Y Cap o Las Fawr (The Cap of Broad Lace) was recorded in April of 1959 at Brynsiencyn, Anglesey. (Show slide with map of Brynsiencyn, Anglesey) Gabriel has this to say about the tune: ‘The song revolves around Mary’s predicament over her new lace cap: how to pay for it without her husband finding out. The text also appears as part of the Anglesey song ‘Cob Malltraeth’ and incorporates interpolated nonsensical phrases—a frequent feature in folk songs recorded in Anglesey.’\(^{18}\) This last comment of Gabriel’s will be important to take note of,

\(^{18}\) Gabriel, \textit{Sonate fur Bassklarinette und Klavier}.\)
as he often adds brief snippets or entire presentations of serial rows that are not quite in the correct order between elements that belong to the serial row or another tonal element, much like the interpolation of nonsense syllables in the text of the folksong.

“The movement begins with a presentation of the serial row, P5 (notice the F centricity from the first movement already making a potential foothold in the last), with a focus especially on the first three notes of the Y Cap o Las Fawr folksong melody. The ascending minor third and major second are here maintained from the melody.

(Show slide with Y Cap o Las Fawr melody and P5 row form, examples 1.7 and 1.8, and demonstrate on bass clarinet)

“To contrast these serial elements that are predominant in the first section of the movement, new, more melodic material is presented in the bass clarinet while the piano presents several chords that represent the complete array of all twelve available pitches in very short spans of time without actually quoting any forms of the original serial row. This moment of clashing tonality and atonality is short lived, however, because Gabriel is now ready, after only 30 measures, to present the next melody.

(Show slide with map of Tregaron, Cardiganshire)

“Y Gaseg Ddu, translated as The Black Mare, is a song that was ‘…especially popular in southwest Wales [which] frivolously recounts the tale of the black mare, bought for a pound at Henfeddau fair, which expired from overfeeding, leaving its owner penniless but local crows and magpies delighted. Appended as a final stanza is “the ballad” pedlar’s traditional formularized
appeal for money—the finance in this case being essential in order to acquire another mare.’

Gabriel also notes that this tune was recorded in November of 1961 at ‘Llangeitho, near Tregaron, Cardiganshire.’

(Show slide with Y Gaseg Ddu melody and demonstrate on bass clarinet)

“This melody is presented in a highly diatonic, tonal fashion, with the only dissonances at the outset being a major ninth in the repeating accompanimental pattern in the piano. However, after the bass clarinet presents the first phrase of the galloping melody, the right hand of the piano takes a moment on its own to present a slightly skewed version of the row P6 before immediately returning to the light accompaniment figure from before, now moved up a major third. This is again interrupted after only one phrase by a variant of P9 in the right hand of the piano, again with nothing else happening while the row runs its course in rapid eighth notes. At its conclusion, though, the piano and bass clarinet are allowed to run their course in almost unadulterated tonal bliss, with the bass clarinet presenting most of the cheery Y Gaseg Ddu melody before another fragmented form of the row is presented.

“This procedure continues for quite some time, with the bass clarinet performing large chunks of uninterrupted melody with mostly tonal accompaniment before a whole sale return to serialism. The right and left hand of the piano then independently imitate a somewhat unordered version of P9 before the bass clarinet takes off alone with several more repetitions. When it finally arrives at a resting point on a low E-flat, however, the piano takes over with a flurry of continuous presentations of I5 and P5 row forms, with the bass clarinet later joining back in. This is one of the longest stretches in the entire movement (probably the entire piece) of continuous

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19 Gabriel, *Sonate für Bassklarinette und Klavier*.
20 Gabriel, *Sonate für Bassklarinette und Klavier*.
presentations of complete serial rows, one after the other with little to no interruption. This span lasts for over two whole pages of the score. Fragments of row forms and even a few complete forms continue, however, for another page and a half after this.

“This then leads into the next folksong melody, Si So, Gorniog (See-Saw, Swaddled One) which was recorded on April 18, 1963, near Dolgellau, Merioneth. (Show slide of map with Dolgellau, Merineth) This nursery song was taught to the singer by his mother when he was a child, and has very much of the lilting character of a child’s song in compound meter.

(Show slide of Si So, Gorniog and demonstrate on bass clarinet)

Gabriel presents this melody at first in the bass clarinet in its entirety, accompanied by a series of descending scalar runs in the piano, perhaps providing some imagery of see-sawing. After this first presentation, the left hand of the piano accompanies fragmentary portions of the melody in the right hand and bass clarinet with ascending leaps of fourths and fifths, again mixing elements of tonality and atonality, with non-diatonic elements very much present in the right hand of the piano and a clash between the left hand of the piano and the melodic material being presented elsewhere in the texture.

Gabriel then presents the melody again in the bass clarinet, now in what is probably its most tonal form, with the piano giving a quick waltz-like down-up-up backing, though even at this point, tonality is still somewhat diluted. This doesn’t last very long, though, as a sequential pattern is formed based on the Si So, Gorniog melody, again with ascending fourths and fifths in the bass, not all of which are perfect, upsetting the previous sense of tonality. This is then followed by extended, non-diatonic scalar passages with occasional fragmented row forms
reappearing. Fragments of tonality and disordered rows continue to appear for much of this last section, with occasional short quotations of the Si So, Gorniog and Y Gaseg Ddu melodies interspersed throughout.

“This leads to the return of the Cob Malltraeth melody from the first movement. Although the melody does not appear in its entirety, the similarities between the prime row forms of the first and last movements allow the first few notes of the Cob Malltraeth melody to appear and lead into a P form and an R form of the Y Cap o Las Fawr row. After a few repetitions of some non-diatonic chords and another repetition of the P5 row form, scalar passages made up of snippets of diatonic and whole tone scales lead to the end of the piece.

“Through the use of subsets of individual melodies throughout the piece, Gabriel has created recurring thematic material, especially in the form of serial rows that drive the music in each of the movements. It is especially interesting to note, though, that the use of possible permutations of the serial row are very minimal, with the first movement using only three of the 48 row forms that can be derived from the first, the second movement only using a serial row in its entirety twice, the third movement using only one row form over and over, and the fourth movement venturing the farthest but still only using a few row forms.

“Gabriel uses this limitation in row forms, though, to keep the ear from wandering too far from the ever present tonal areas upon which the piece is based. The fact that each of the movements has a clear tonal center is due in large part, in fact, to the limited use of row forms and the constant exchange of these serial elements with the non-serial, diatonic elements and folksong melodies.
Performance Practice

(Show slide of “Performance Practice”)

“Transitioning now to the subject of performance practice, the main focus of my work in this area has been in regards to the altissimo register. The extreme altissimo register has been explored by a few bass clarinetists in the past 50-55 years of the instrument’s development as composers have begun writing more challenging and avant-garde works for the instrument that explore the furthest reaches of its capabilities. Of course, as an auxiliary member of the clarinet family, the bass clarinet does not draw as many specialists as the somewhat more manageable soprano clarinet. This has led to a seeming lack in pedagogical information on the instrument, especially in regards to playing in this higher register.

“When performing as a clarinetist in any register, but especially the upper register, it is important firstly to keep the muscles at the corners of the mouth firm and drawn in toward the sides of the mouthpiece, while at the same time letting the bottom lip relax and become a cushion on which the reed can rest, allowing freer vibration. The same can be said about the bass clarinetist’s embouchure, only now, with the larger mouthpiece, comes an increased need for firm corners and a relaxed lower lip.

“This makes sense when one considers the increased surface area of the bass clarinet reed, which results in an increase, consequently, in the surface area of lower lip that is in contact with the reed. To avoid stifling the sound, one must allow free vibration of the reed, but to keep that sound from being too unwieldy, the increased firmness in the corners will aid in overall control. An additional aid in the upper register, as many soprano clarinetists may know, is to pull the upper lip in toward the front teeth and roll it slightly under.
“These principals are in contrast to the idea of merely increasing the embouchure size when playing bass clarinet, since the effect when using the principals mentioned above for attaining a good bass clarinet embouchure will feel, from the perspective of the player, as if they are being required with some parts of the embouchure to increase, and others to actually decrease. The relaxed lower lip a clarinetist uses now requires even more relaxation when playing the bass clarinet, while the firm corners and upper lip required for soprano clarinet performance now require even more attention.

“There is one more aspect of bass clarinet playing that needs to be addressed, and that is the topic of voicing, or the subject of tongue placement—especially in the rear of the mouth—as well as the positioning of the soft palate. Any clarinetist who is not familiar with this terminology will at least be familiar with the feeling inside the mouth associated with a slight change in tongue position when moving from one register to another. Consider, for example, written C4, the note produced when depressing the thumb and first three fingers of the left hand. If the register key is depressed while using this same fingering, a written G5 will result.

(Demonstrate on bass clarinet) It is possible, however, to produce the G using the C fingering, without use of the register key. This can be accomplished by slightly raising the soft palate, as if yawning, and raising the back of the tongue toward the roof of the mouth. One can continue this process, moving to higher overtones with this same fingering to achieve a written E6, A6, and beyond. The standard fingerings for these notes are, in fact, so similar, that this re-voicing to achieve higher pitches is necessary, and probably one of the most common reasons for struggles in the upper register amongst young clarinetists.
“These same principals hold true for the bass clarinetist, only with this larger instrument, a much greater sensitivity in the placement of the tongue is required in the upper register. As the members of the overtone series get closer to one another—which happens the higher one plays on the instrument—it becomes more difficult to control which one of these overtones will speak with any given fingering. The higher the bass clarinetist progresses above C6, the more a correct fingering does not guarantee that the desired note will speak. As such, it is highly advantageous for the bass clarinetist, especially at the beginning stages of learning the instrument, to spend a significant amount of time exploring the upper register and incorporating this into long tones, scales, and tonguing exercises.

“This does not mean, however, that a correct fingering for each note in the bass clarinet’s altissimo register is not vital. As one proceeds higher into this range, however, there are increasing amounts of possible fingerings, with three, four, or more viable fingerings for each note, depending on the environment in which the note occurs. With this in mind, I have created a fingering chart for the altissimo register of the bass clarinet based on my own experimentation in the register. Although there will not be time to demonstrate all of the fingerings I am using, I would like to demonstrate some of the most difficult notes a bass clarinetist may run into, starting with a written A6 and working up to C-sharp7.

(demonstrate bass clarinet fingerings with fingering chart showing on projector)

“I will have copies of my entire fingering chart available at the end of the recital for any clarinetist who is interested keeping one for their own personal use. Now, I hope you will enjoy our performance of Wolfgang Gabriel’s Sonata for Bass Clarinet and Piano, Opus 30.”