

MUSICAL BORROWING IN THREE HOMMAGES BY BÉLA KOVÁCS:  
A COMPARISON OF PIECES FOR SOLO CLARINET WITH REPERTOIRE BY  
DEBUSSY, STRAUSS, AND BARTÓK

by

SARAH EMILY LLOYD LAWING

(under the direction of D. Ray McClellan)

ABSTRACT

This document is a comparative study of homages to Claude Debussy, Richard Strauss and Béla Bartók with the *Première Rhapsodie* by Debussy, *Till Eulenspiegels lustige Streiche* by Strauss, and *Contrasts* by Bartók. The homages were composed by Hungarian clarinetist Béla Kovács and published in 1994 as a book of etudes for clarinet study entitled *Hommages*. They are frequently performed in auditions, competitions, and recitals by clarinetists around the world. The book contains homages to Bach, Paganini, Weber, Debussy, de Falla, Strauss, Bartók, Kodály, Khatschaturian. The homages selected for this study, Debussy, Strauss, and Bartók, offer an excellent look into the musical borrowings of Kovács. This paper explores those borrowings through theoretical analysis of three of these homages alongside a piece by the composer whose style is being imitated.

INDEX WORDS: Béla Kovács, Homages, Hommages, Musical borrowing, Debussy, Strauss, Bartók, Clarinet, Sarah Lawing, *Première Rhapsodie*, *Till Eulenspiegel*, *Contrasts*

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Forward.....	1
Section 1: Debussy.....	4
Section 2: Strauss.....	16
Section 3: Bartók.....	27
Bibliography.....	33
Appendix 1: Lecture-Recital Script.....	35
Appendix 2: Accompanying Slides to the Lecture-Recital.....	44

## Forward

In recent years a collection of nine pieces for solo clarinet by Hungarian clarinetist and composer Béla Kovács (b. 1937) has become increasingly studied and played by clarinetists. These *Hommages*, published in 1994, are each written in keeping with the style of a well-known composer: Bach, Paganini, Weber, Debussy, de Falla, Strauss, Bartók, Kodály, and Khatschaturian. Kovács manages to beautifully emulate the styles of each of the nine composers mentioned.

Béla Kovács teaches at the Franz Liszt Academy of Music in Budapest, Hungary and at the University of Music and Dramatic Arts in Graz, Austria. For twenty-five years he was principal clarinetist with the State Opera of Budapest. He has toured internationally as a soloist and can be heard on numerous recordings, including two CDs of his own music—*Hommages á* and *Béla Kovács Plays Clarinet Just a Little Bit Differently*. His publications include two method books for the clarinet, one book of scales, and the book of *Hommages*, as well as various other pieces for solo clarinet and chamber ensembles.<sup>1</sup> He is certainly the best-known Hungarian clarinetist in recent history, and his contributions to the clarinet repertoire are significant.

In his own foreword, Kovács states that his “pedagogical activities inspired [him] to compose the *Hommages*,” and that it is his hope that they will “find success even on the concert stage.”<sup>2</sup> These pieces have certainly found success, not only on the concert stage, but also as audition and competition pieces, and as part of the repertoire of études in many clarinet studios around the world. Part of why they have seen success in so little time is certainly due to their carefully crafted composition that resonates with clarinetists in particular. Playing each piece is like finding a lost jewel by a familiar

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<sup>1</sup> Paula Smith-Diamandis, “Thessaloniki State Conservatory Master Classes, April 1-5, 2004: A report and an interview with Béla Kovács,” *The Clarinet* 32, no 1 (December 2004), 79.

<sup>2</sup> Béla Kovács, *Hommages* (Leverkusen, Germany: Edition Darok, 1994), 1.

composer—in many cases one that is reminiscent of that composer’s writing specifically for the clarinet. Many musicians would be able to name the composer being imitated just by listening to any of the *Hommages*—they truly are that convincingly written. Studying each piece can help the performer to further understand and experience the unique stylistic writing of each composer.

In an interview in 2004, Kovács remarked—“I started writing about ten years ago. I don’t really know what inspired me, but one day I was practicing at the Conservatory and playing around with the Strauss *Der Rosenkavalier*, which I really love. One of my students heard me playing and asked me if I would write it out for him. After that I went on to write the *Hommage to Bach*.”<sup>3</sup> He goes on to say that his version of *Der Rosenkavalier* eventually became another composition entitled *Ich begrüße Sie, Herr Johann Strauss!*, not the *Hommage á R. Strauss*.

In my studies I have found that Kovács uses a variety of methods to capture the styles of each composer. Each method involves a kind of “musical borrowing,” a term which J. Peter Burkholder uses to refer to “a new piece [which] may refer to existing music in various ways.”<sup>4</sup> The kinds of musical borrowing Kovács employs can be broken down into two large categories.

The first category refers to musical borrowing from a specific piece. It is my belief that Kovács had one piece by the original composer in mind when writing each of the homages. Usually the piece by the original composer is one that clarinetists are intimately familiar with, either from the solo or chamber repertoire for clarinet or from orchestral repertoire that heavily features the clarinet. Kovács borrows from these pieces in a variety of ways, including reworking a musical theme, borrowing a gesture, indications seen on the actual page, and aspects of form.

The second category of musical borrowing Kovács uses has to do with general style characteristics associated with each composer. This refers mostly to melodic and harmonic language

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3 Smith-Diamandis, 78.

4 J. Peter Burkholder, "Borrowing," In *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, edited by Stanley Satie, (London: Macmillan, 1980), 5.

used by the composer, but can also refer to other style characteristics depending on the piece. The homages to Debussy, Strauss, and Bartók offer an excellent look into the musical borrowings of Kovács. All three of these composers are from the twentieth-century, but all have different qualities in their stylistic writing. In this paper I will offer insights into the ways Kovács emulates the styles of these three composers.



### Section 1: Debussy

The most famous piece of solo repertoire for the clarinet by Claude Debussy is the *Première Rhapsodie*. I believe it is this work that Kovács had in mind when he wrote his *Hommage à C. Debussy*. As a professional clarinetist who is a university professor and performer, Debussy's rhapsody is no doubt a part of Kovács's musical subconscious. Kovács has a proclivity to improvise on music he knows well, as he says in the aforementioned quote.

In order to understand how the homage relates to the *Première Rhapsodie* I will first look at the overall form of the piece before focusing on specific passages. The rhapsody by Debussy is approximately eight minutes in length, while the homage is about three, so while the form of the homage imitates the form of the rhapsody, it is condensed. The rhapsody has many small sections that can be combined into four larger sections—slow, fast, slow, fast. Within these sections may be an occasional digression to another tempo, but on the whole they are homogenous in tempo. The homage has two longer sections, slow and fast, followed by a brief restatement of each at the end of the piece (slow, fast). These four tempos mirror those found in the rhapsody on a smaller scale. Table 1 shows how each piece is broken up into these sections and the approximate percentages of the entire piece that each section occupies. Though the percentages do not correspond exactly, the two larger sections are first in both pieces, followed by two shorter sections.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Section percentages calculated in real-time from the live recording of the rhapsody my own lecture-recital.

Table 1—Comparative sizes of sections in Debussy's *Première Rhapsodie* and the homage<sup>2</sup>

	Debussy <i>Rhapsodie</i>			Kovács <i>Hommage</i>		
	Measures	Time	%	Measure	Time	%
Section 1—slow	mm. 1-44	2:50	37%	mm. 1-12	0:56	33%
Section 2—fast	mm. 45-123	2:32	33.5%	mm. 13-69	1:31	53%
Section 3—slow	mm. 124-162	1:19	17.5%	mm. 70-72	0:16	9%
Section 4—fast	mm. 163-206	0:56	12%	mm. 73-80	0:09	5%

Perhaps the most definitive part of the form of each piece is the main theme and its restatements throughout the piece. In the rhapsody the main theme begins at rehearsal number 1, and is heard twice more. The same is true in the homage, except that the main theme is heard first at the very beginning of the piece instead of being delayed as in the rhapsody. The condensed form of the homage could be why Kovács did not delay in introducing the main theme. The respective lengths of the themes follow the same pattern as the overall form—while the theme in the rhapsody is ten measures in length, the theme in the homage is only four measures.

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<sup>2</sup> Claude Debussy, *Première Rhapsodie pour orchestra avec clarinet principale: reduction pour clarinette et piano* (Paris: Durand & C<sup>ie</sup>, 1910)

Measure numbers referenced are taken from this edition of the rhapsody.

Table 2—recurrence of principal themes

Debussy theme:

Original version	mm. 10-20
Second version—octave higher, shortened	mm. 40-44
Third version—original octave, shortened	mm. 152-157

Kovács theme:

Original version	mm. 1-4
Second version—pitches changed, shortened	mm. 10-12
Third version—pitches changed, shortened	mm. 70-72

Another comparable feature of the form is the presence of a *scherzando* section in each piece. In fact, Kovács actually shows the indication of this section in the actual score, just as Debussy did. The ratio of proportions between pieces is not as consistent here as it was with the lengths of the larger form and the main theme. The *scherzando* section of the Debussy is only twenty-eight measures, while the corresponding section in the homage is fifty-eight measures. In my opinion, this is because in the Debussy there are two large fast sections, as well as other passages that seem to be the inspiration for Kovács's *scherzando* section, including one passage marked as a *scherzando* in parenthesis (rehearsal number 5). In the homage, Kovács combines this material into one large section.

In the homage by Kovács there are many aspects of the melody that are reminiscent of themes and gestures from Debussy's rhapsody. The main theme of the homage certainly has its roots in the rhapsody, but not exclusively from the main theme. The rhythms and flow of the main theme in the homage have more in common with the introductory material from the rhapsody. The rhythms are freer than in the main theme of the rhapsody, including very short rhythmic values such as thirty-second notes. In the slower tempo, the faster values create the feel of pushing and pulling as they go between longer note values instead of the steadier tempo in the main theme of the Debussy rhapsody. The

effect of each is very impressionistic, a visual arts term which Debussy has long been associated with, which refers to the paintings of French artists such as Monet and Renoir. The example below shows measures 4-6 of the rhapsody. The beginning measures of the homage can be seen in figures 2 and 5.



Figure 1—Debussy mm. 4-6

There are some features of the main theme in the homage that are more like the main theme from the rhapsody. The first four notes of each create three descending intervals. In the rhapsody the intervals are a descending major 2<sup>nd</sup>, a descending minor 3<sup>rd</sup>, and another descending major 2<sup>nd</sup> equaling a total span of a perfect 5<sup>th</sup> while in the homage they are two descending minor 2nds, and a descending minor third, equaling a perfect 4<sup>th</sup>. The melodic contour and range of the theme in the homage more closely resemble that of the main theme in the Debussy. The examples below show the opening measures of the two themes. The similarities between the melodic contours are visually evident.<sup>3</sup>

Debussy:

*pp* *doux et penetrant*

Kovács:


*p* *expressif.*

Figure 2—principal themes from the *Rhapsodie* and the *homage*

<sup>3</sup> For purposes of this paper the pitches referred to are written, not sounding. The conclusions drawn in the discussions of various pieces are not dependent on sounding pitches as they relate to each other. Also, the homages are for solo clarinet, which has no accompaniment.

The way Kovács treats each return of the main theme in his homage is strikingly similar to Debussy's rhapsody as well. The second time the theme is heard in the Debussy (rehearsal number 3) there is an ascending diatonic run that gradually slows before the return. In the homage there is also a run (more octatonic than diatonic) which ascends and slows into the return of the theme. Kovács uses the marking *retenu* (meaning "held back") in the measure preceding the return—a marking Debussy also used in the rhapsody. Figure 3 shows these runs. The first return of the theme in each case is truncated. In the homage only the first half is included and all the pitches of the gesture in the second measure are transposed down a minor 3<sup>rd</sup>. In the rhapsody only the first five measures of the main theme are included in the first return of the theme, which again is half of the original theme.

Debussy:



Kovacs:




Figure 3—measure preceding the first recurrence of principal themes

The second return to the main theme in each piece is similar as well. The preceding material has little in common this time, although Kovács approaches this return in the same way he approached the first return—with a run slowing down into the theme. The lengths of the returns are again proportionate. In the homage, Kovács includes two measures out of four along with a re-composed third measure. In the rhapsody, Debussy includes six measures out of ten from the original.

In the earlier discussion of the form of the piece, it was proposed that the reason the *scherzando* section of the homage is longer is that it includes borrowing from material other than that of

the corresponding section of the rhapsody. One of the most striking characteristics about Kovács's *scherzando* is the alternation between slurred and staccato eighth notes, a characteristic similarly featured in measures 32 through 35 of the rhapsody. Also, each repetition of the repeated staccato eighth notes in the homage begins with two of the same note just as in measure 33 of the rhapsody.

Another remarkable similarity has to do with the reworking of one of the most recognizable gestures in the rhapsody. At the very end of the piece, the clarinet ascends into the altissimo register, playing three accented quarter notes followed by a descending grace note into the last held note of the piece, ending on a very grand and memorable note. As identifiable as this gesture is with the Debussy rhapsody, it could not be left out of Kovács's homage, especially if the rhapsody was in fact his inspiration for the homage. This is perhaps the most convincing evidence of the connection between the two pieces.

Kovács does include a similar gesture in his homage, but not at the end of the piece. Rather, it is placed after the *scherzando* and before a brief cadenza which leads into the second return of the theme. In the rhapsody the intervals are an ascending minor 2<sup>nd</sup>, an ascending augmented 2<sup>nd</sup>, and a descending major 3<sup>rd</sup>. In the homage the intervals are an ascending major 2<sup>nd</sup>, an ascending major 3<sup>rd</sup>, and a descending minor 3<sup>rd</sup>. If they were the very same intervals this type of musical borrowing would be more along the lines of exact quotation, which Kovács is not in the habit of employing in the *Hommages*. Below are the two gestures, which both begin on an E-flat in the altissimo of the clarinet (though the notes will not sound the same pitch as the homage is for A clarinet). In the homage the time signature is 9/8 rather than 3/4, but the three accented eighth notes sound in time the same way the three quarters from the rhapsody do. The grace note to the last note is also absent from the gesture in the homage.

Debussy:




Kovács:



Figure 4—*analogous gestures in the Rhapsodie and the homage*

The time signatures throughout do not generally correspond in the two pieces, but there are some rhythmic characteristics about the rhapsody that Kovács highlights. The entirety of the homage is written in compound meter, while the rhapsody is in simple meters. The similarity is seen in that just as Debussy writes triplets in simple meter (i.e. measures 32-35), Kovács includes duple passages in his compound meters (i.e. measures 29-31). There is also a quintuplet gesture in the rhapsody which is repeated a few times at rehearsal 6 that Kovács reworks as part of his main theme (measure 3). The shape of the gesture is literally inverted, so instead of descending one note first and then ascending, the gesture in the homage ascends one note first and then descends.

Debussy:



Kovács:




Figure 5—*similar quintuplet gestures in the Rhapsodie and homage*

As mentioned, Kovács uses some of the same musical indications on the page as Debussy does in the rhapsody. There are many more such as the tempo indication *Lent* or “slow” at the beginning of the homage—Debussy uses *Rêveusement lent* or “dreamily slow” in the same place. The expression marking at the beginning of the rhapsody is *doux et expressif* or “soft and expressive” while Kovács again shortens it to just *expressif*. Kovács includes a few other French terms throughout such as *plus en vif en peu* (“a little more lively”) and *penetrant* (“penetrating”), but these are not exact indications seen also in the rhapsody. Even the indication for which clarinet to use is in French on the page of the homage, although instead of being *Clarinette en Si b* (B-flat clarinet is used in the rhapsody) it is for *Clarinette en La* (A clarinet).

The last similarity I wish to discuss between the rhapsody and the homage is based on an inconsistency between the Durand and Urtext editions of the *Première Rhapsodie* having to do with measures 201 and 203. The Durand clarinet part (the part from which most clarinetists play) contains the notes D-sharp, E-natural, D-natural, E-flat in succession in measure 201, but the Urtext edition has D-sharp, E-natural, D-sharp, E-natural. The Urtext gives two reasons for this choice in pitches. The more convincing reason is that they are the same pitches heard two octaves higher in measure 203. There is also a discussion included in the Urtext of the many different versions of this measure seen in the sources consulted. As a side note, in the Dover edition (which is a reprint of the original publication of orchestral version), the notes are the same as in the Urtext. The following examples are the versions of this measure from different sources.



Durand:

Urtext:

*Figure 6—discrepancy between editions of the Rhapsodie*

As an educator and performer Kovács is more than likely aware of this inconsistency, and there happens to be a similar inconsistency in the homage that has to do with the first measure of the piece and its subsequent returns throughout. The first time this measure is written, there is an E-natural included in the measure, but in the two returns of the theme (measures 10 and 70) there is an E-flat where the E-natural was in the first occurrence. It may not seem like a big difference, but the effect is aurally jarring to the listener when expecting an exact restatement of the theme. One reason the note may be changed in the returns is because the second measure is also altered. It is feasible that Kovács made this change consciously. It also may be a misprint by the editor, but since there is only one edition of the *Hommages* available, there is no other edition to compare it with. If by chance this similarity is more than coincidental, the extent to which Kovács was inspired by the rhapsody in writing his homage is not only intrinsic, but also very carefully and cleverly carried out.

Not only are there strong connections between Debussy's rhapsody and the homage, but there is one last element that Kovács uses to capture the style of Debussy in a broader context. Debussy was known for his use of "exotic scales," which are now more commonly referred to in theory as "referential collections." Among this category are the whole tone, octatonic, pentatonic, hexatonic, and acoustic

collections.<sup>4</sup> Debussy is most widely recognized for his use of the octatonic and whole tone collections, but others of these can be found in his music. Of course there are examples in the rhapsody (see Table 3) as it is an essential characteristic of Debussy's oeuvre. Their use is more a part of his compositional technique on a whole than it is specific to the rhapsody.

*Table 3—Representative uses of referential collections in Debussy's Rhapsodie*

Measure(s)	Referential Collection
m. 28	Whole Tone 1
m. 46	Octatonic 0
m. 49	Octatonic 2
m. 84	Acoustic +4

Debussy's harmonic and melodic language certainly pushes the limits of traditional tonal music, but because his music was still based in the tonal world his usage of these referential collections was usually only used sparingly, not for extended passages. Kovács uses these collections much in the same way, never sticking to one collection for too long before changing to another one or coming back into the diatonic realm. The octatonic collections are most widely used, but there are some short examples of whole tone, pentatonic, hexatonic, and acoustic collections as well.

One interesting passage that demonstrates Kovács's rapid changes between collections is in the *scherzando* measures 29 through 33. All of measure 29 fits into the natural pentatonic collection while all of measures 31 and 32 fit into the acoustic collection AC -3. Measure 30 serves as a bridge between the two, adding only the E-flat before introducing two more flats in the subsequent measures. Then in measure 33, all the notes fit into the octatonic collection OCT 0. AC -3 easily transforms into OCT 0 by

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<sup>4</sup> Joseph Nathan Straus, *Introduction to Post-Tonal Theory* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2000)  
Adrian Childs, *MUSI 8120: Contemporary Trends in Theory II* (Class Notes, University of Georgia, Athens, GA, 2010).

dropping F and adding E and F-sharp. Within five measures of music Kovács employs three referential collections, easily moving from one to the next. A similar thing happens again in measures 47 through 51. This time Kovács changes between 3 different pentatonic collections in the first two measures, then AC +1 in measure 49 and 50, and then a hexatonic collection in measure 51. The transitions in this passage are not as smooth, but Kovács manages to fit five different collections into these measures.

The most extensive use of one collection is the presence of OCT 2 at the end of the *scherzando*. All of the notes of the four measures preceding the cadenza and more than two-thirds of the cadenza fit into this collection. OCT 2 is also the most widely used collection throughout the *scherzando* section of the piece. Kovács also uses hints of the whole tone collection WT 1 in the measure immediately preceding the *scherzando* and again in the last measure of the second return of the main theme (the B-flat is an outlier). Table 4 is a diagram of the piece in terms of referential collections used (excluding diatonic collections).

Table 4—use of referential collections in the homage to Debussy

Measure(s)	Referential Collection
m. 6	Octatonic 0
mm. 8-9	Octatonic 1
m. 12	Whole Tone 1
mm. 20-24	Octatonic 2
m. 29	Pentatonic
mm. 31-32	Acoustic -3
m. 33	Octatonic 0
mm. 47-48	Pentatonic

Measure(s)	Referential Collection
mm. 49-50	Acoustic +1
m. 51	Hexatonic
mm. 60-63	Octatonic 2
mm. 64-65	Octatonic 1
mm. 66-1 <sup>st</sup> line of cadenza	Octatonic 2
2 <sup>nd</sup> line of cadenza	Octatonic 1
m. 73	Whole Tone 1

Despite the many uses of referential collections, the homage does still have a tonal center, just as the music of Debussy does. The two key signatures indicated in the homage are g minor and G major, and the pitches G and D certainly have strong tonic and dominant implications throughout the piece. The piece begins and ends on G, and particularly in the main theme D is the pitch that the melody emphasizes most.

The *Homage á Debussy* is a very convincing tribute to the general style of Debussy and to the *Première Rhapsodie*. Because of his use of referential collections, Kovács's melodic writing in this homage very aptly imitates the early Romantic French composers like Debussy. By using various tempi, articulations, and rhythms he achieves the signature impressionistic style—many of the examples discussed relate to passages from the rhapsody.

## Section 2: Strauss

The homage to Richard Strauss is composed, in my opinion, in reference to the tone poem *Till Eulenspiegels lustige Streiche* (“Till Eulenspiegel’s Merry Pranks”). This piece from the orchestral repertoire is one that features the clarinet section prominently, particularly the clarinet in D (played on E-flat clarinet). The character of “Till Eulenspiegel” comes from German folklore—a practical jokester throwing every situation he enters into utter disarray. In the tone poem, Strauss often represents this tricky character in his writing for the E-flat clarinet—an instrument which due to its piercing tone quality and high range lends itself easily to such treatment.

The sheer size in comparison of the tone poem to the homage makes it more difficult to find similarities between the two. Instead of beginning with form, it is more appropriate in this context to first analyze how Kovács reworks particular musical themes and gestures from the tone poem. Since Kovács would be more familiar with the clarinet parts and because the piece features the clarinet so heavily, I will use Strauss’s writing for the clarinet in *Till* as my starting point.

The major theme representing *Till* throughout the tone poem is first heard in the E-flat clarinet five measures before rehearsal number 3<sup>9</sup>. It is heard subsequently in various forms, all based on this first entrance. Not only is it heard in the E-flat clarinet—in the score to *Till* this theme litters every page and is heard in virtually every section of the orchestra. This “idée fixe” could be said to be the germ out of which the whole piece takes its existence. Kovács composes a similar theme which recurs throughout the homage as well. This theme is heard either in its original form or a variation of it thirteen times in the homage, which is barely longer than three minutes.

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<sup>9</sup> Richard Strauss, *Till Eulenspiegel*, Op. 28 (New York: Edwin F. Kalmus, 1900)  
Rehearsal numbers referenced are taken from this edition of *Till*.



Figure 7—analagous themes from *Till* and the homage

When studying the two side by side, the similarities are numerous. The only difference in rhythm of the first three notes of each theme is that instead of entering on the second eighth note of the 6/8 measure, the first value is shifted over to enter on the first eighth note in the homage. The other two notes are articulated at the same time, except in the homage the first three notes are shifted to the second big beat of the measure instead of the first. The pitch content in the first three notes of the homage can be linked to the first measure of the theme from *Till* as well. The first two notes of the *Till* theme are scale degrees 3 and 1, and in the homage the second and third notes are also scale degrees 3 and 1. Scale degree 5 below these notes is also heard in each theme—the first note of the homage, and the fourth note in *Till*, which is emphasized on the second big beat. Also, the markings in the score are strikingly similar. The indication above the *Till* score for the whole orchestra is *immer sehr lebhaft* (“always lively”) and the corresponding indication in the homage is simply *sehr lebhaft* (“very lively”).

The two diverge in the notes heard on the downbeat of the second measure, however. In *Till* the interval is a descending diminished seventh. In the homage the interval from the last note of the first measure to the first note of the second measure is an ascending perfect fifth (scale degree 1 to scale degree 5). However, the second time the theme is restated in the homage, in measure five, the corresponding interval this time is a descending diminished seventh!

In its third, fourth, and fifth appearances the theme includes an ascending perfect fifth. The rest of the theme is loosely transposed. The last three notes maintain their intervallic relationships, but the first note in each instance is lowered by a half step so that the first interval of the theme is now an augmented sixth instead of a major sixth. The fifth restatement is an exception. The rhythm is altered and two notes are added—just a variation on the original theme, the same way Strauss treats his theme throughout the tone poem.

The sixth, seventh, and eighth restatements of the theme are even more different than the original. Here Kovács leaves off the first note of the theme, so that the last three notes of the theme are now the first three notes and he adds a fourth note, a descending minor ninth. In the seventh and eighth restatements, the time signature has been shifted to common time, but Kovács adjusts the rhythmic values so that the last note of the theme still occurs on the next downbeat.

Kovács then leaves this thematic material until the final section of the homage (the last eight measures) where the last five statements of the theme are heard in fast succession bringing the piece to an exciting close. The intervals in these final instances are not consistent with the original statement or with each other, but do maintain the direction of the intervals and the contour of the original statement. This passage could be compared to the fugal concept of a “tonal” answer rather than an “exact” answer. The pitches in these sequences are more dependent on the harmonic implications of this passage, which will be discussed later.

*Strauss's Till Eulenspiegel* has a program associated with it in which each musical section represents another chapter of the tale. It begins with a short prologue as if to say “Once upon a time...” followed by a theme in the horn that introduces Till Eulenspiegel. The tone poem chronicles the mischievous character’s pranks, flirtations with girls, and poking fun at the establishment before he is captured by the authorities and taken to be executed. Following this there is an epilogue using the


same music as the prologue and then the spirit of Till gets the final say with an grand orchestral statement of the E-flat clarinet theme.

In terms of form, Kovács does take cues from the sectional tone poem. The homage is also broken up into sections. The melodic material, gestures, and composition of these can be traced back to certain passages in the tone poem. The homage skips over the introductory material and the first horn theme and begins with the theme modeled after the E-flat clarinet theme in *Till*. The first page of the homage takes its cue from the ensuing section of the tone poem in which Till is up to his pranks. In the brief section of the homage beginning on the second page the first *piano* statement of the theme is heard. In the tone poem, there is also such a moment in the fifth measure of rehearsal number 13 in which the E-flat clarinet plays its theme at the *piano* dynamic. Even the German indications in both pieces have similar meanings. In the homage, this statement is marked *leichtfertig* (“lighthearted”), while the corresponding indication in the tone poem is *schelmisch* (“playfully” or “skittishly”).


The section marked *Schnell* beginning halfway down the second page of the homage actually relates directly to a passage in the flute part of the tone poem. Beginning at rehearsal number 6 in *Till* the flute part has the exact same rhythm as in the first measure of this section in the homage. Skipping the second measure, the third measure also corresponds rhythmically with the second measure of the homage section. The third measure of the homage is derived from the flute material at rehearsal number 7 in which the flute repeats the first three notes of the theme creating a hemiola effect. Figure 8 shows these corresponding measures. Interestingly, the material in this section of the homage is more transparent in its borrowing from the original theme in *Till*. Instead of deriving this passage from the theme of the homage, Kovács borrows the rhythmic material straight out of the tone poem.




Strauss rehearsal 6:



Strauss rehearsal 7:




Kovács:



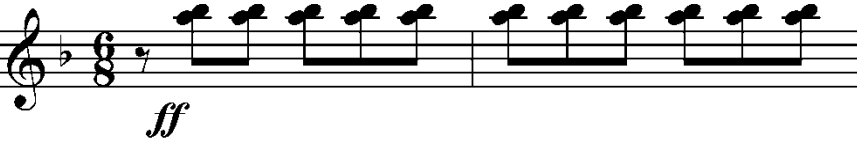
*Figure 8—comparison of two excerpts from Till with a passage from the homage*

One very prominent gesture that is repeated twice in the measures following this is remarkably similar to material found between rehearsal numbers 9 and 12 in *Till*. Figure 9 shows this gesture along with its source material from the tone poem. The three repeated staccato notes each preceded by a grace note a half step higher can be seen as a combination of two different gestures. The first figure is heard in the flute part seven measures after rehearsal number 9 and is repeated again at rehearsal number 10. This gesture contains the half step grace note followed by three repeated notes. In the same passage, Strauss creates a similar effect in the oboe parts by writing three repeated notes played in simultaneous half steps by the two oboe players. The same figure is seen again in the oboe parts and in the clarinet and bassoon parts between rehearsal numbers 11 and 12. The gesture as seen in the homage takes the three repeated eighth notes from both figures, and the grace note from the flute part. Since the homage is written for a single line instrument, the effect of playing simultaneous half steps is achieved in that Kovács uses the grace note before each repeated eighth note.

Strauss flute part:



Strauss oboe part:



Kovács:

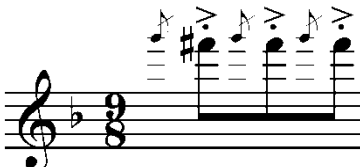


Figure 9—comparison of two figures from *Till* with one from the homage

There is no prologue or epilogue in the homage, but there is a section beginning on the third page of the score marked *sostenuto* which demonstrates the same calmness heard in the prologue and epilogue of *Till*. The dynamics are soft in both passages, and there is a sameness of melodic contour and rhythmic values. At the end of the prologue the clarinets play an ascending arpeggio that reaches a long held note before the first theme is heard in the horn. Similarly, toward the end of this section in the homage the soloist plays an ascending chromatic run, the last note of which has a fermata which anticipates the transitional material heard next.

The following section in the homage can also be connected to a section of *Till*. The section in the homage is marked *Walzer tempo* with the dotted half note equaling 64. In the tone poem, the section which begins in the ninth measure of rehearsal number 27, although it is marked in 6/8, has a similar tempo so that the feeling of a waltz is created. If the time signature in the homage was changed to 6/8 (making two measures equal to one) and all the note values were doubled, the exact similarities would be more visible on the page, but aurally these similarities are already obvious. There is even melodic material from the first clarinet part in the tone poem that Kovács seems to imitate—a theme

which is attempting to start itself but ends up back where it began. It attempts this numerous times in the clarinet parts and other voices before finally catching on and going somewhere else. In the homage the theme restarts itself four times before it finally moves on to different material. The following examples show the first few measures from each of these passages.

Strauss Clarinet 1 part:

Kovács:

The image displays two musical staves. The top staff, labeled 'Strauss Clarinet 1 part:', is in 6/8 time with a key signature of one sharp (F#). It begins with a piano (*p*) dynamic and features a melodic line with several slurs and ties. The bottom staff, labeled 'Kovács:', is in 3/4 time with a key signature of one sharp (F#). It starts with a forte (*f*) dynamic, includes a five-measure rest marked with a '5' and a fermata, and ends with a piano (*p*) dynamic. Both staves show melodic lines with various articulations and dynamics.

Figure 10—analagous passages in *Till* and the homage

After the waltz in the homage which culminates in a big arrival on the downbeat of the next section, there is a drastic drop in dynamic and a thirteen measure crescendo. This corresponds nicely to the big arrival at rehearsal number 31 in *Till*. Then, starting at rehearsal number 33 there is a drop down to *pianissimo* in the orchestra followed by a long crescendo that lasts until rehearsal number 38, when *Till* is captured.

The final section of the homage consists, as stated before, of the last five statements of the theme (see Figure 12). In *Till*, the section following his capture features four statements of the theme, but they are more spread out. The two most similar statements here are the fifth one in the homage and the third in the tone poem. Of all of the statements these two are the loudest and the most deliberate.

Strauss:



Kovács:



*Figure 11—corresponding statements of the themes from Till and the homage*

All the statements in the tone poem lead up to the moment of Till's execution. I would argue that in the homage, there is no execution at all. The final two measures in the homage decidedly end on a positive note with a two descending arpeggios driving toward tonic. In the Kovács version the mischievous prankster is triumphant and lives to play another joke—just as the E-flat clarinetist would have it!

Outside of specific connections between the homage and *Till Eulenspiegel*, Kovács is also true to the compositional style of Strauss in general terms of melody and harmony. Considered to be part of the late Romantic and early Modern generation of composers, Strauss's harmonic language is akin to the late Romantic compositions of fellow Germans Mahler and Wagner. His harmonic language is mostly at the edge of what is considered functional harmony, sometimes even stepping slightly beyond that edge into more contemporary harmonic relationships.

Even though the homage is written for solo clarinet, so no vertical harmonies are present, harmonies are implied in many melodic passages. A perfect example of this is the very last passage of the homage which features the last five statements of the theme in sequence. The following example shows a possible harmonic analysis of this passage.

Figure 12—harmonies created by melodic material in the final measures of the homage

The key is F major, and this sequence of harmonies is very convincing as a final cadential formula for the piece. The harmony in the first measure (F major) is related to the harmony in the second measure (A-flat major) by a major third. Late romantic and early Modern composers such as Strauss used a technique in composition known as parsimonious voice-leading to transform one triad into another by means other than tonal harmonic functions. In recent theory scholarship, labels for these transformations have been developed.<sup>10</sup> The labels are (P)—referring to a parallel relationship, (R)—referring to a relative relationship, and (L)—referring to leading-tone exchange. The change F major into A-flat major is achieved by first applying the label (P) so that F major becomes f minor. Then, f minor becomes A-flat major by applying the label (R). Instead of labeling the first three notes of the second measure with a roman numeral, it is only necessary to indicate the transformation. On the second big beat of the second measure, by introducing the G-flat, the A-flat triad now becomes functional (V7/ bVI). The resolution of this harmony is delayed by an intervening dominant chord—also a very Straussian harmonic occurrence.

The section immediately preceding this one also demonstrates writing which is representative of the kind of late Romantic/early Modern harmonic language of Strauss. The section begins with a series

<sup>10</sup> Adrian Childs, *MUSI 6170: Dissolution of Tonality* (Class Notes, University of Georgia, Athens, GA, 2009).  
Richard Cohn, "Maximally Smooth Cycles, Hexatonic Systems, and the Analysis of Late-Romantic Triadic Progressions," *Music Analysis* 15.1 (1996), 9-40.

of secondary fully-diminished seventh chords resolving to the harmonies ii, iii, vi, and V. Figure 13 shows this passage with the harmonies labeled. The triad based on the third scale degree is not found often in the harmonic writing of Classical and early Romantic composers. The presence of this harmony in this passage makes it less functional and more transitional—passages featuring sequences of fully-diminished seventh chords often are. This type of transitional passage could be found in any number of pieces by Strauss.

*ff* *subito p*

I    vii<sup>o</sup>7/ii    ii    vii<sup>o</sup>7/iii    iii    vii<sup>o</sup>7/vi    vi    vii<sup>o</sup>7/V    V

Figure 13—sequence of secondary leading tone chords and resolutions in the homage

The melodic writing Kovács uses in the homage also has similarities to melodies found in the music of Strauss. In many cases, rather than writing very smooth, conjunct melodies, Kovács adds an extra octave or more to an interval between two notes, much like Strauss does. This creates a more grand gesture and adds an element of surprise to some of Strauss's melodies that makes his writing more progressive than the always smooth, song-like melodies of the early Romantic generation of composers.

One example is in the fourth statement of the theme where the pitches in succession are A, F, C, B-natural. Figure 14 shows the most conjunct version (given octave equivalence) of this melody alongside the actual melody Kovács writes. Instead of having the space between the C and B-natural as a half-step, he added two extra octaves and creates a descending minor sixteenth instead.

Original version:

*ff* *sfz p*

Conjunct version:

*ff* *sfz p*

Figure 14—gesture from the homage illustrating the disjunct melodic motion in the style of Strauss

Another example of this kind of writing is seen on the second page, two measures before the section marked *Schnell*. If the low E and F were transposed up an octave, the result would be a very beautiful conjunct melody, instead of the one actually present.

The *Homage á R. Strauss* is a wonderful sampling of the highlights from *Till Eulenspiegel*. Without effort Kovács is able to transport the listener and the player into the world of Strauss's grand tone poems. The homage maintains the presence of the mischievous main character and contains many melodic and implied harmonic passages in the revolutionary style of Strauss.

### Section 3: Bartók

Bartók's chamber piece *Contrasts* is what I propose Kovács had in mind when composing his *Hommage á Bartók*. It is a three-movement work for violin, clarinet, and piano famously written for American Jazz clarinetist Benny Goodman and Hungarian violinist Josef Szigeti. *Contrasts* also happens to be the first chamber work that Béla Kovács recorded and he has recorded it two times since then.<sup>1</sup>

The homage is only a bit longer than three minutes, in comparison to the almost twenty-minute *Contrasts*, but each section of the homage can be connected to a musical entity in one of the movements of *Contrasts*. Aside from borrowing themes and passages of music, Kovács also models many musical gestures using motives found in *Contrasts*. Kovács also excellently captures the general stylistic writing of Bartók in his homage. In this particular incidence, it will make the comparison of the two pieces more coherent to integrate how Kovács models his melodic writing after Bartók's into the discussion of how the homage is like *Contrasts*.

Many features of the opening four measures of the homage, which are marked *Lento*, can be traced back to the opening sixteen measures of the second movement of *Contrasts* in which the violin and clarinet play a duet accompanied sparsely by piano. The material in the homage is only related to the violin and clarinet parts. The dynamics and tempo of each are very similar—*pp* in the homage and ranging from *pp* to *mp* in *Contrasts*; quarter note equal 56 in the homage and quarter note equals 60-63 in *Contrasts*. Also, the opening of the homage is in 6/4 time, which corresponds to the 3/2 time signature of some of the corresponding measures of *Contrasts*.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Paula Smith-Diamandis, "Thessaloniki State Conservatory Master Classes, April 1-5, 2004: A report and an interview with Béla Kovács," *The Clarinet* 32, no 1 (December 2004), 78

<sup>2</sup> Béla Bartók, *Contrasts for Violin, Clarinet, and Pianoforte* (London, New York: Boosey & Hawkes, 1942) Measure numbers referenced are taken from this edition of *Contrasts*.



In this passage, the contour of the clarinet part in *Contrasts* is the exact opposite of the violin—meaning that if an ascending interval is used in the violin part, a descending one is used in the clarinet part, but not necessarily the same interval. Instead, the exact symmetry is inversive within each individual line, not between them, meaning that each collection of pitches would map onto itself on an inversive axis. All of the pitch class collections found in each of the three gestures within the space of one slur marking in both violin and clarinet parts are inversionally symmetric. The pitch classes as they are presented are not in order so to form an exact mirror, but are taken instead as a whole pitch class collection. The same is true for the pitches of the four gestures in the homage. In borrowing this musical attribute, Kovács is not only relating the two pieces, but he is also capturing a key characteristic of Bartók's compositional style. The pitch classes of each measure, taken as a collection, are symmetrical around an inversive axis. Also of note is the fact that measure 4 of the homage is simply a transposition of measure 1 at T -7.<sup>3</sup> The following shows the exact inversive axes on pitch wheels for each of the first four measures from both the homage.

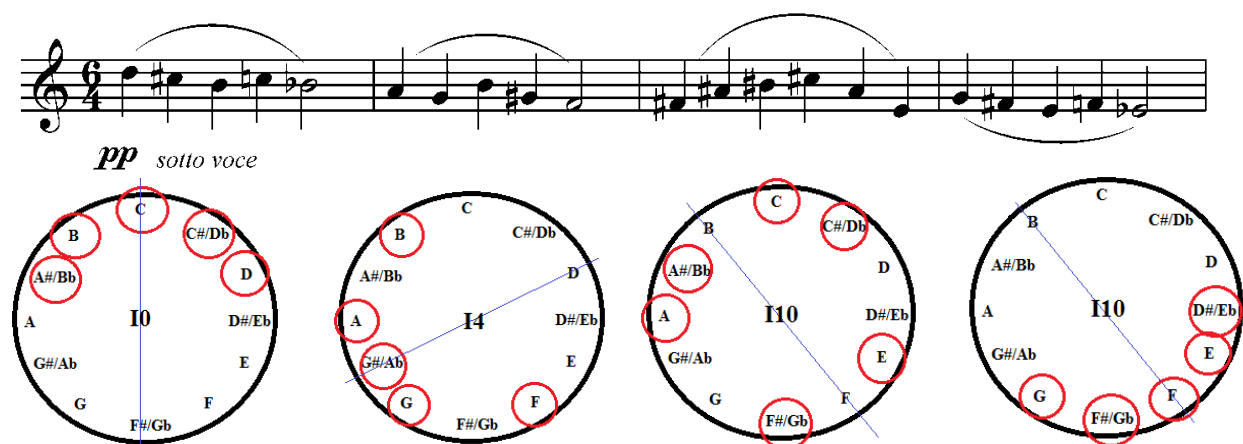



Figure 15—mm. 1-4 of the homage to Bartók showing inversive symmetry

The vast majority of the material in the next section of homage (marked *Allegro agitato*) features a folk-like melody, very similar to those in the music of Bartók. The first passage begins in

<sup>3</sup> Adrian Childs, *MUSI 8120: Contemporary Trends in Theory II* (Classnotes, University of Georgia, Athens, GA, 2010).

measure 5 of the homage, the second in measure 80, the third in measure 91, and the fourth in measure 117. It is particularly similar to the melody in the third movement of *Contrasts*. The following example shows the clarinet part starting in measure 116 from *Contrasts* and the relating first statement of the theme from the homage.

Bartók:



Kovács:




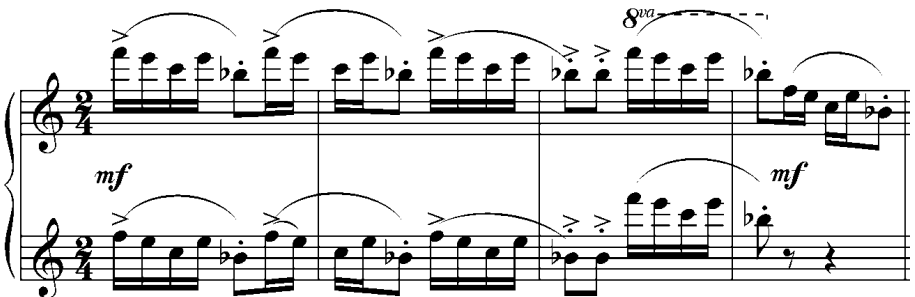
Figure 16—themes in *Contrasts* in the homage containing two of the same rhythmic motives

The melody in the homage contains two of the same rhythmic motives as the melody in *Contrasts*. The motive of two repeated, accented quarter notes is very identifiable with Hungarian folk music. Both melodies are in 2/4 time, and also feature the same rhythmic pattern of two sixteenth notes, one eighth note, and one quarter note. The third statement of the theme in the homage is an exception—this passage has changing meters and is more ornamented than the other statements. One of the ornamentations in this statement is a glissando which is present in both the piano and violin parts of *Contrasts*.

The material in measures 27-31 of the homage, which also appears on the second page, comes from very similar passages in *Contrasts* in which the clarinet and piano noodle around, such as in measures 18-35 from movement three. The main characteristic of these passages is music which has no harmonic motion, but rather emphasizes the same pitches over and over. The rhythmic effect is more

interesting that the melodic—each repetition creates accents in irregular parts of the measure. Figure 17 shows measures 26-29 from the piano part of *Contrasts* and measures 27-31 of the homage.

Bartók:



Kovács:




Figure 17—analogous passages from *Contrasts* and the homage showing similar melodic writing

The third page of the homage features an extended cadenza following the third statement of the main theme. This third statement, the most free of the statements of the main theme, leads naturally into the cadenza. The cadenza is very similar to the clarinet cadenza from the end of the first movement of *Contrasts*. They both begin with flourishes of nine notes rising and falling between coming back to the same note (F-sharp in both pieces). The second part of the cadenza in *Contrasts* begins with two rising quintuplets followed by sextuplets all the way up to the altissimo range. The material beginning on the second half of the third page is very similar—groups of ascending notes in the chalumeau register of the clarinet. The following four passages show the beginnings of each of these gestures from both *Contrasts* and the homage.

Bartók 1:

Kovács 1:

Bartók 2:

Kovács 2:

Figure 18—two sets of similar passages from the cadenzas of *Contrasts* and the homage

The music which begins in last example seen in Figure 18 from the homage is sixteen total measures in length and also relates to a passage in the third movement of *Contrasts*. The pitches, rhythms, and articulation are so close in these examples that it is impossible to deny the direct correlation. Figure 19 is a comparison of the final measures of the section in the homage with several measures from the passage in *Contrasts*.

Bartók:

Kovács:

Figure 19—analagous passages from *Contrasts* and the homage showing similar rhythms, pitch content, and articulation

The result of the homage is as if Kovács took highlights from the three movements of *Contrasts*, rearranged their order, and composed a much smaller version of the piece. Kovács does a wonderful job at capturing the key elements of *Contrasts* and of Bartók's general compositional style in his homage—just as convincingly as he does with the homages to Debussy and Strauss. Each piece is a chance for clarinetists and audiences to experience the style of the composer to which the homage is dedicated. The homages are a legitimate part of the contemporary repertoire for the clarinet—pieces which deserve not only to be studied as etudes, but also to be performed as concert pieces.

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Appendix 1: Lecture-Recital Script

*[show SLIDE 1]*

*LECTURE: Welcome and Thank You*

*1min*

**“Good afternoon friends, family, and faculty members and thank you all for attending. This lecture-recital is one component of the DMA multi-modal document. I hope you will find the next hour both interesting and enjoyable. Before I begin I want to express my gratitude to my major professor, Dr. McClellan, for being a wonderful teacher, mentor, and coach over the past five years. I thank my committee members, Adrian Childs and Angela Jones-Reus, for their assistance with this project and with many other academic endeavors throughout my time here at UGA. I acknowledge and appreciate the musicians joining me on stage today—Anatoly Sheludyakov on piano and Shakhida Azimkhodzhaeva on violin—and thank you to Cayla Bellamy for graciously agreeing to turn pages. I also would like to thank my whole family for their love and support: especially my husband, Matthew, and mother, Carol who have helped me in so many ways over the past year.**

*LECTURE: Introduction*

*3min*

**“I first encountered Béla Kovács’s book of 9 homages during the first year of my master’s work when Dr. McClellan assigned me the homage to Spanish composer, Manuel de Falla. I liked it so much that I opened my first master’s recital with it, and soon discovered that the remaining 8 homages are equally exciting and just as well written.”**

*[show SLIDE 2]*



“In the forward to this collection, Kovács writes that his ‘pedagogical activities inspired [him] to compose the *Hommages*,’ and that it is his hope they will ‘find success even on the concert stage.’<sup>1</sup>

These pieces for solo clarinet, published in 1994 as a book of etudes by Hungarian clarinetist Béla Kovács, have found their way into clarinet studios and are being heard in auditions, competitions, and concert halls around the world.

After hearing the homage to Strauss performed by fellow UGA clarinetist Brooke Rutledge a couple of years ago, I became convinced that this piece was Kovács’s reworking of the famous tone poem by Strauss—*Till Eulenspiegel’s Merry Pranks*. I began listening to the other homages and comparing them to works by the original composers. I formed my own hypothesis regarding Kovács’s compositional process: that every *Hommage* is his version of an analogous piece of music—one that is deeply embedded in his musical subconscious.”

[show SLIDE 3]

“I was overjoyed when I came across a 2004 interview with Kovács in which he had this to say regarding the genesis of the *Hommages*—‘I started writing about ten years ago. I don’t really know what inspired me, but one day I was practicing at the Conservatory and playing around with the Strauss *Der Rosenkavalier*, which I really love. One of my students heard me playing and asked me if I would write it out for him. After that I went on to write the *Hommage to Bach*.’<sup>2</sup> He goes on to say that his version of Strauss’s *Der Rosenkavalier* eventually became a composition for clarinet and piano—a statement that thankfully does not debunk my theory that the homage to Strauss is based on *Till*.”

LECTURE: Brief comments on Debussy Rhapsody

2min

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<sup>1</sup> Béla Kovács, *Hommages* (Leverkusen, Germany: Edition Darok, 1994), 1.

<sup>2</sup> Paula Smith-Diamandis, “Thessaloniki State Conservatory Master Classes, April 1-5, 2004: A report and an interview with Béla Kovács,” *The Clarinet* 32, no 1 (December 2004), 78.

“Today you will hear two homages paired with the original compositions I propose they are based on—Debussy’s *Première Rhapsodie* and Bartók’s *Contrasts*. By hearing them performed so closely together, it is my hope that you, the audience, will be able to hear similarities in musical style. The *Première Rhapsodie* is certainly one of the best-known works from the clarinet repertoire. It was originally written for clarinet and piano in late 1909/early 1910 as a jury piece for students at the Paris Conservatory. It is dedicated to Paul Mimart, who taught at the conservatory and who premiered the work with orchestral accompaniment in 1911. As you listen, take note of the recurrence of this principal theme throughout the piece:”

*[show SLIDE 4 and PLAY THEME]*

“I hope you’ll also notice how Debussy uses variations in tempo, articulation, and rhythm to achieve his signature impressionistic style.”

*[show SLIDE 5]*

*PERFORMANCE: Debussy Rhapsody*

*9min*

*LECTURE: Comparison to the homage*

*6min*

“While I will not be able to share every similarity between the rhapsody and the homage with you, I would like to share some examples from each piece to aid you in making aural connections. Hopefully you were able to hear the principal theme of the rhapsody return twice after its original presentation. The homage by Kovács also has a theme that returns the same number of times.”

*[show SLIDE 6]*

“If you look at the two side-by-side, you’ll notice that the two melodies begin with the same contour. The first three intervals in each are all descending, creating the same visual shape. Though the two

themes have this in common, the rhythmic structure of the theme from the homage finds its roots in the introductory material from the rhapsody.”

*[show SLIDE 7]*

“The rhythms are freer than in the main theme of the rhapsody, including very short rhythmic values. In the slower tempo, the faster note values create the feel of pushing and pulling as they go between longer note values much like the beginning of the rhapsody.

Another remarkable similarity has to do with the reworking of one of the most recognizable gestures in the rhapsody. I’m sure you remember this climactic moment from the very end of the piece:”

*[show SLIDE 8]*

*[play gesture]*

“As identifiable as this gesture is with the Debussy rhapsody, it could not be left out of Kovács’s homage, especially if the rhapsody was in fact his inspiration. This is perhaps the most convincing evidence of the connection between the two pieces. Kovács does include a similar gesture in his homage, but not at the end of the piece. Rather, it is before a brief cadenza which leads into the second return of the main theme. This gesture and the original both begin on an E-flat in the altissimo range of the clarinet (though the notes will not sound the same pitch as the homage is for A clarinet).”

*[show SLIDE 8B]*

“In the homage the time signature is 9/8 rather than 3/4, but the three accented eighth notes sound in time the same way the three quarters from the rhapsody do. As you can see, Kovács also leaves out the grace note. Here is what his gesture sounds like:”

*[play example from homage]*

“Debussy was known for his use of ‘exotic scales,’ also referred to as ‘referential collections.’ Among this category are the whole tone, octatonic, pentatonic, hexatonic, and acoustic collections, many of which can be found in the rhapsody. This slide illustrates the pitch content of the octatonic collections both on the staff and on pitch wheels. Pitch wheels are basically clock faces, where each semi-tone in the octave is represented by a position on the clock, starting with C as zero. There are three octatonic collections—Octatonic 0, Octatonic 1, and Octatonic 2. Instead of having 7 notes like a major or minor scale, the octatonic scale has 8 notes with an interval pattern that alternates between half steps and whole steps. You can see on the pitch wheels each collection retains the same basic pattern, just shifting clockwise by 1 for each rotation.”

*[show SLIDE 9]*

“Here is what an octatonic scale sounds like:”

*[play OCT 0]*

“Measure 46 of the rhapsody is an example of Debussy’s use of octatonicism. Though some pitches from the collection are absent, you can see that the pitches present all belong to Octatonic 0. They are circled in red:”

*[show SLIDE 10]*

*[play example]*

“The octatonic collections are the most widely used type of referential collection in the homage. The pitch content in measures 20 through 24 all belongs to octatonic 2. In this example it is easier to see the alternation of half and whole steps. All the pitches of octatonic 2 are present in this collection.”

*[show SLIDE 11]*

*[play example]*

“Just as Debussy did, Kovács also uses musical aspects such as rhythm, articulation, and tempo to create a variety of moods throughout his miniature version of the original composition. In doing

**this he is truly able to capture the essence of the rhapsody. Following the performance of the homage to Debussy there will be a short break to reset the stage.”**

*[show SLIDE 12]*

*PERFORMANCE: Debussy homage* *2min40sec*

*BREAK* *4min*

*LECTURE: Brief comments on Bartók Contrasts* *1min*

**“I was relatively unfamiliar with the next piece on the program before I began this project. *Contrasts* is a three-movement work for violin, clarinet, and piano famously written for American Jazz clarinetist Benny Goodman and Hungarian violinist Josef Szigeti. The outer movements are based on Hungarian folk music, while the second movement offers a respite or “contrast” in between. Bartók’s melodic writing is different from Debussy’s, reaching further beyond the scope of tonality. Most striking about this piece to me are the rhythmic motives that give it its Hungarian flavor in the first and third movements and the haunting melodies in the second movement created by Bartók’s unique musical language.”**

*PERFORMANCE: Bartók Contrasts* *18min*

*LECTURE: Comparison to the homage* *7min*

**“Though the piece you just heard is three movements and nearly twenty minutes in length, the homage is less than three. Still, Kovács manages to extract the key elements from each**

movement and stitch them together to create a very convincing tribute to Bartók's *Contrasts*. I'll take you through several sets musical examples, including at least one from each movement of *Contrasts*.

In the first movement of the Bartók, you heard a cadenza that began like this:"

[play example]

[show SLIDE 13]

"The homage contains the following music during the cadenza-like middle section:"

[play example]

[show SLIDE 13B]

"The similarities are obvious simply by hearing the examples, but if you are able to see the two examples together, the comparison is more apparent. Even the pitch the music comes to rest on before and after each flourish of notes is F-sharp in both cases, simply down an octave in the homage. The connection between these passages has informed my performance of the homage, helping me with the timing and placement of each gesture.

The homage begins with four measures relating to the beginning of the second movement of *Contrasts* in which the violin and clarinet play a duet accompanied sparsely by piano. The dynamics and tempo of each are very similar— ranging from *pianissimo* to *mezzo-piano* in *Contrasts* and *pianissimo* in the homage; quarter note equals 60-63 in *Contrasts* and quarter note equal 56 in the homage. Also, the opening of the homage is in 6/4 time, which corresponds to the 3/2 time signature in *Contrasts*. Here are a few measures from each piece, beginning with the opening of the second movement of *Contrasts*."

[show SLIDE 14]

[play examples]

“In *Contrasts* the pitch class content of each phrase of both the clarinet and violin parts is inversionally symmetric, a hallmark of Bartók’s melodic writing. The same is true of each of the first four measures in the homage. If you circle each pitch heard within one measure on a pitch wheel there is an axis upon which the collection of pitches present would be the same if you inverted, or flipped, them. This slide is an illustration of how this is present in the first four measures of the homage.”

[show SLIDE 15]

“The next excerpt is from the third movement of *Contrasts*.”

[show SLIDE 16]

[play example]

“It features two rhythmic motives characteristic of Hungarian folk music—two accented quarter notes and two sixteenths and an eighth followed by a quarter note. The theme heard throughout the homage also has both of these motives in it:”

[show SLIDE 16B]

[play example]

“In my last example the pitches, rhythm, and articulation are so close that if there was any doubt about the connection between these pieces before, there can be none now. Shown here are excerpts from the third movement of *Contrasts* and from the homage. I’ll play them both so you can hear how similar they are.”

[show SLIDE 17]

[play examples]

**“And here is Kovács’s version of *Contrasts*.”**

*[show SLIDE 18]*

*PERFORMANCE: Bartók homage*

*2min40sec*

*LECTURE: Conclusions*

*1min*

**“The similarities between the homages and the original compositions associated with them are too numerous to cover within the scope of an hour. Today I have presented examples that I believe make the connections between the pieces most evident to the listener. By taking the musical examples out of context, it is my hope that you were then able to hear the similarities between pieces during the performances of the homages. The remaining homages contained in the book are just as compelling. Through his writing, Kovács is able to transport the performer and listener into the world of each composer. Playing these pieces is like discovering lost jewels of the repertoire from the nine masterful composers included in the book of *Hommages*. Kovács’s desire that these pieces find success on the concert stage has certainly come true—and deservedly so.”**

*[show SLIDE 19]*

**“Thank you again for attending, and enjoy the rest of your evening.”**

*[show SLIDE 20]*



Appendix 2: Accompanying Slides to the Lecture-Recital

Musical Borrowing in Two Hommages by Béla Kovács

A Comparison of Pieces for Solo Clarinet with Repertoire by Debussy and Bartók

by Sarah Lawing



Hommages pour Clarinette for Clarinet Klarinete

My pedagogical activities inspired me to compose the Hommages. The pieces were intended to be études or studies which students may use as supplementary material to the usual dry and mechanical - although indispensable - exercises. They contain various challenges. If performed with impressive dexterity, with proper tone production and sufficient knowledge of styles, coupled with a sense of humor and a certain amount of fantasy, they could - hopefully - find success even on the concert stage. There, I recommend the Hommages to all my former, present, and future students, and also to those, who, recognizing their value, may wish to devote more concentrated attention on them.

1994

Béla Kovács Professor of Clarinet Franz Liszt Music Academy, Budapest and Music Conservatory of Oraz

New!! The „Hommages“ is now available on CD, played by the composer Béla Kovács himself.

“I started writing about ten years ago. I don't really know what inspired me, but one day I was practicing at the Conservatory and playing around with the Strauss *Der Rosenkavalier*, which I really love. One of my students heard me playing and asked me if I would write it out for him. After that I went on to write the *Hommage to Bach*.”

from “Thessaloniki State Conservatory Master Classes: April 1-5, 2004: A Report and an Interview with Béla Kovács”

by Paula Smith-Diamandis


DEBUSSY: Beginning of main theme



*pp* doux et penetrant




KOVÁCS: Main theme



*p* expressif

DEBUSSY: Main theme



*pp* doux et penetrant

KOVÁCS MAIN THEME

DEBUSSY INTRODUCTORY MATERIAL

DEBUSSY

KOVÁCS

PITCH CONTENT OF OCTATONIC COLLECTIONS

DEBUSSY: Example containing pitches from OCT 0

KOVÁCS: Example containing pitches from OCT 2



BARTÓK: Excerpt from clarinet cadenza (mvt 1)

KOVÁCS: Excerpt from cadenza

BARTÓK (mvt 2)

*pp*

Lento (60-63)

KOVÁCS

*pp* sotto voce

Lento (56)

KOVÁCS: Inversional symmetry in opening measures

*pp* sotto voce

BARTÓK

KOVÁCS

*mf* etc.

BARTÓK

KOVÁCS



# THE END

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