

JIŘÍ HLAVÁČ AND HIS *TEN VIRTUOSO ETUDES FOR CLARINET*: AN INTERPRETER'S ANALYSIS OF THE FIRST FIVE MOVEMENTS OF THE CYCLE

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Abstract

The study presents an analysis of *Ten Virtuoso Etudes for Clarinet*, written in 1992 by the eminent Czech clarinetist and teacher at the Academy of Performing Arts in Prague Jiří Hlaváč (1948). The author, a laureate of several international clarinet competitions and Hlaváč's pupil, tries to prove that the etudes are a feat of international significance in professional music pedagogy, which can positively influence clarinet teaching worldwide. She analyzes each etude from a technical and performance point of view and suggests their effective practice and correct solutions to selected technical problems. She bases her analyses and reflections on original interviews with Jiří Hlaváč, her teacher and colleague.

Keywords

Jiří Hlaváč (1948) – clarinet – virtuoso etudes – methodology – Czech clarinet school – higher school music education – Academy of Performing Arts in Prague

Czech clarinetist and teacher Jiří Hlaváč

Jiří Hlaváč (born 1948 in Gottwaldov, today Zlín, Czech Republic) is internationally known as a clarinetist, saxophonist, teacher, professor, and former dean of the Music and Dance Faculty of the Academy of Performing Arts in Prague. He also made his mark in the history of Czech culture as a composer, music popularizer, moderator, and poet.¹ In 1974, he founded the internationally renowned Barock Jazz Quintet, which he led for 34 years. The same period is tied to his membership in the Czech Wind Trio and his work in the Art Quartet. Currently, he is a member of the Five Star Clarinet Quartet. As a soloist and chamber musician, he has given over 5000 public performances and recordings for radio, television, and record companies in over 60 countries on five continents. His discography includes over thirty compact discs; he has recorded over four hundred compositions for radio. For Czech Television, he prepared as a dramaturg and scriptwriter the cycles of the programs

1 So far, no professional publication has been written about Jiří Hlaváč to summarize his work and life. It was one of the reasons why I – his Ph.D. student at the Music and Dance Faculty of the Academy of Performing Arts in Prague in clarinet – decided to write a dissertation *Jiří Hlaváč in the context of Czech and international clarinet schools* (expected completion in 2023). An essential source for me was also my interviews and personal experience since 2008 when I first met professor Jiří Hlaváč at the International Clarinet Festival in Žirovnice, Czech Republic. In my dissertation and this study, I analyze Hlaváč's life-long performing, pedagogical, organizational, and compositional activities.



Jiří Hlaváč, photo archive.

The Best of Classics, Musica da Camera, Music I Like. For Czech Radio, the cycle Quo Vadis, the extensive cycle of Between the Streams lasted 20 years, and Radio Classic, the equally voluminous cycle about Czech authors and performers Conquered the World.

The Czech Protective Association of Authors (OSA) records sixty of his original compositions. The CD releases include *Direct Journey*, *Clarinetissimo I*, *Clarinetissimo II*, *Clarinetissimo III*, *Prayer for Zuzana Navarová*, *Defilé*, and *Genus*.

Hlaváč has published books of his poetry, *Imprints of the Soul*, *Small Poetic Stops* and prosaic *As I See It*, *Josef Suk's: Attempt at a Portrait*, *Stories on Five Lines*, *In the Embrace of the Muses*.

For his artistic activity, he has been awarded many times: e.g., the Golden Shield of the Panton label, Grammy Classic (for the recording of concerts by F. V. Kramář-Krommer, Supraphon 1993), Association of Music Artists and Scientists Award, Bohuslav Martinů Foundation Medal, Artis Bohemiae Amicis, Rudolf II Award, Gold Medal of the Academy of Performing Arts, Honorary Citizenship of the City of Třeboň.

His teaching activity spans forty years, and he has educated 12 laureates of prestigious international clarinet competitions, including Vlastimil Mareš, Irvin Venyš, and Anna Paulová.

Hlaváč has held the position of Chairman of the Permanent Competition Committee of the Prague Spring International Music Competition from 1995 to 2016 and Director of the Bohuslav Martinů Foundation from 2017 to 2021. He co-founded the Music Performance Courses Prag-Wien-Budapest, the Clarinet Festival at the Žirovnice Castle. He participated as a juror in more than a hundred international and national performance competitions in Europe and other countries.

Ten Virtuoso Etudes for Clarinet by Jiří Hlaváč

Ten virtuoso etudes for clarinet (1992) by Jiří Hlaváč serve primarily to improve the technique of clarinet playing constantly. Their imaginative and challenging nature can rightly be ranked with etudes such as Ernesto Cavallini's *Capriccios for Clarinet*, Paul Jeanjean's *18 Etudes de Perfectionnement*, or Robert Stark's *24 Virtuoso Studies* and deserve to be also recognized in the world scale. Moreover, each of them can also be played at the concert.² Hlaváč states:

“It meant that playing the etudes solo in recitals is possible. It should not come across as an obstinate etude. Each etude is meant to have its character and expression, but it solves a certain technical problem.”³

According to Hlaváč, the etudes are not only for advanced players but can be practiced by anyone who adapts the tempo to how they can handle it. The moment he finds that he has the etude rehearsed, he can go gradually up to the tempo that is given in the etude.

The author has deliberately written some places, so they really do not play comfortably. As he says himself, the intention is not to make them sound too lilting in some places but rather to make the clarinetist able to deal with the heavy couplings in *legato* and *staccato* and to play them with ease. As a performer, I have to say that the etudes helped me a lot in my technical maturity.⁴ Connections that I initially perceived as difficult to play gradually became better and more relaxed after systematic practice, and my *embouchure* and flexibility also improved considerably. Hlaváč says:

“I did not really make it easy for myself, and I did not want to make the etudes so-called easy to play and likable. Underhandedly likable – absolutely not! I will be damned, but it's going to bring something.

² 10 etudes by Jiří Hlaváč were published in 1992, and he composed them over several years as an exercise for himself.

³ According to the oral communication of Jiří Hlaváč on 24 February 2021.

⁴ Since I am basing my analyses on my own experience and interpretative attempts, I will I often use the first-person formulation.

The main point was: Not to keep dwelling on the idea of what is so-called difficult to play the clarinet. Nobody cares about that. Even what's played badly can be brought to a point where the player can feel it, but the listener does not notice it anymore.

Another point is that I didn't want to write anything longer than a two-page etude for one simple reason. Attention has to go full speed all the time, and if I add another two pages, there are often mistakes just from tiredness because it's exposed, we cannot breathe completely freely, etc. Among other things, I wanted to train that level of concentration and attention because those two pages can be mastered.”⁵

Jiří Hlaváč performed his etudes at various openings of exhibitions and named each etude in color. He always stood in front of a painting and chose an etude that he thought corresponded with the painting. So in the etudes, we find colors such as green, brown, red, blue, yellow, and turquoise, expressing their character. Whenever the professor told me what color he assigned to a given etude, I usually felt the same way. However, the idea of color naming developed later, which is why the colors are not mentioned in the edition of the etudes. Jiří Hlaváč recalls:

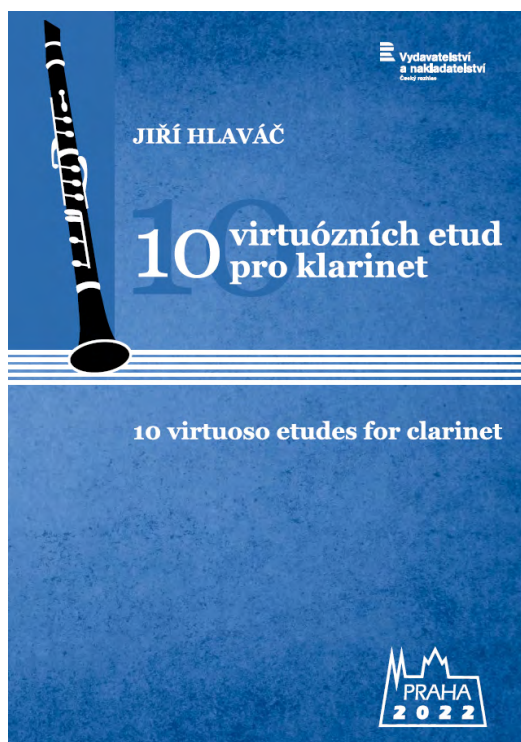
“I remember playing some of the etudes at various openings and having them named in color. Actually, it had the advantage that when I played them for some of these artists afterward, I could choose from the palette of colors that they were working with.

So it was not at the primary birth that I thought the etudes represented a color. It was an afterthought in the secondary plan, given that I was really playing them at the art exhibitions. It also had the advantage, first of all, that one played them and kept oneself in a certain condition, and the second thing was that I could, of course, work with it according to the time proportion because it could be shortened or, on the contrary, extended in some improvisational way, etc. But somewhere I remember, it was in the beautiful New Hall Gallery at the National Theatre, by the way, that was sensational because I could go picture by picture and play something in front of each of them. It actually went according to the counterpoint and the character of that visualized work. That was very interesting. I know I could then work with it because it has ten different characters and ten, let's say, different expressive positions.”⁶

In Hlaváč's etudes, I often had to solve problems with the tone of the low *Eb* (*Eb3*) because the etudes are still written for the so-called “long” full-flap clarinet with a range down to the *Eb3*, whereas on the vast majority of modern clarinets used today, the *Eb3* is no longer found and the clarinet therefore only reaches its range to the *E3*. I was dealing with this problem each time at the point in the etude where the *Eb3* was present. The possible options were to play the *Eb3* an octave higher or to replace it with *E3*. However, only in extreme cases did I have to change the notation of the surrounding notes for melodic reasons.

⁵ According to the oral communication of Jiří Hlaváč on 24 February 2021.

⁶ According to the oral communication of Jiří Hlaváč on 10 March 2021.



Czech Radio edition of Hlaváč's *Etudes* from 2022.

It is worth mentioning that the famous Czech bass clarinetist Josef Horák⁷ played ten virtuoso etudes by Jiří Hlaváč with his students on the bass clarinet.⁸ Josef Horák, known by world critics as the “Paganini of the bass clarinet”, told to the professor afterward that his etudes helped his students a lot with the overall sound and relaxed embouchure while playing the bass clarinet.⁹

The composer writes in the introduction of the etudes:¹⁰

“The etudes and technical exercises are intended to give us instrumentalists a sense of playing confidence and relaxation.

⁷ Josef Horák (1931–2005), a world-famous bass clarinetist and a founding member of Due Boemi di Praga.

⁸ Josef Horák played the studies several times, first in concerts as solo pieces on the bass clarinet, and worked on them with his students.

⁹ Based on Jiří Hlaváč's interview with Josef Horák during the CD recording of Prague trio, Op. 184 by Norman Heim on 2 May 1999 on Czech Radio.

¹⁰ The manuscript of *10 etudes* is stored in the personal archive of Jiří Hlaváč. The etudes were published in 1992 first. See Hlaváč, Jiří. *10 virtuoso etudes for clarinet*. Rokycany: Midi Music Studio – Edy's Score, 1992, the first edition. In 2022 the etudes were published for the second time by the publishing house of Czech Radio. See Hlaváč, Jiří: *10 virtuoso etudes for clarinet*. Praha 2, Vinohradská 12, Vydavatelství a nakladatelství Českého rozhlasu. ISBN ISMN 979-0-660601-549-2. In this study, I am working with the first edition. The second edition has no differences in notation from the first edition. The clarinet's range is still preserved in the etudes up to *Eb3*.

My etudes, which I have dedicated to professors Vladimír Říha and Antonín Doležal, are for you who are really serious about the clarinet. Through these etudes, we will address the issues of touch, breathing and fingering technique, legato, and staccato practice, tonal range, and full dynamic range – everything essential and important.

The tempo markings determine the final form, which you will arrive at by gradually rehearsing from significantly slower tempos. Etudes should become your daily “companion” in your work. If you devote your attention to them for 30 minutes a day for 8–10 months, your technical level will improve significantly, and if you practice them daily for years, you will acquire playing mastery.

It is not pride that leads me to this statement but proven practice, and I wish you a strong will and great self-discipline to achieve this standard.”¹¹

Analyses

Since it is impossible to publish an analysis of all ten etudes in the study’s limited scope, I have selected only the first five parts of the cycle, which I consider the most exciting and expressively and technically different from each other.

Etude No. 1

Etude No. 1 has a very playful character and often alternates even and odd measures. It has a prescription of *Allegro fresco* and a color designation of green. This etude serves as a preparation for Aaron Copland’s *Concerto*.¹² Jiří Hlaváč also used the etude’s theme in the fourth movement of his *Ebony Suite for Clarinet Quartet*, which he dedicated to Karel Krautgartner¹³ (see Figure 1). In his *Ebony Suite*, moreover, the individual voices are beautifully intertwined; the melody is interwoven in the individual clarinet voices and is complemented by the harmonic accompaniment of the bass clarinet. Before the return of the main theme, the piece is complemented by the effect of the rhythmic tapping of the clarinet’s flaps, which gradually slows down. This is followed by a reprise of section *a*, which, unlike the etude, ends with an effective trill with a melodic upswing.

The etude is written in a small three-part song form *a b a*. In the first part *a*, there are often alternating measures of ten-eighths, nine-eighths and three-eighths. By alternating even and odd measures, the clarinetist can improve his or her rhythmic sense, which needs to be applied to performance pieces such as Aaron Copland’s *Concerto* and many other 20th and 21st-century works, including jazz.

¹¹ Hlaváč, Jiří. *10 virtuoso etudes for clarinet*. Rokycany: Midi Music Studio – Edy’s Score, 1992.

¹² Aaron Copland (14. 11. 1900 Brooklyn, New York, USA – 2. 12. 1990 Sleepy Hollow, New York, USA) was an American composer, composition teacher, writer, and later a conductor of his own and other American music. His *Concerto* for clarinet, strings, and harp was written between 1947 and 1949 for jazz clarinetist Benny Goodman.

¹³ **Karel Krautgartner** (1922–1982) was a famous Czech jazz and classical clarinetist, saxophonist, arranger, composer, conductor, leader of his orchestra, and teacher.



Figure 1. Etude I, theme, mm. 1-8.

The etude should not be played cumbersome in any way; on the contrary, the clarinetist should try to play it lightly and playfully. It is crucial “to sing” the melody and concentrate on constructing the phrase. Although there are a few short pauses in the etude, which sometimes tempt us to take unnecessarily frequent breaths, a clarinetist should try to sustain the whole phrase in one breath. This will give the etude a much lighter feel, and more, the clarinetist will not tire as quickly.

It reminds me of a line that clarinetist Yehuda Gilad¹⁴ uttered several times in his masterclasses: “If you do not need to breathe, do not breathe!”¹⁵ So I think this rule applies universally to almost all pieces, and etudes for clarinet.

A virtuoso motif often appears in the etude, which can cause technical difficulties for any player (see Figure 2). This motif is heard in slight variations, first in the third measure from the note *D*₅ and then several times an octave higher. In addition, Jiří Hlaváč has added accents to this melody, which every player should not forget, as they will help us to maintain the rhythm and tempo of the etude. It is essential to play the full measure rhythmically, accurately, melodically, and with expression. If, for example, the clarinetist stretches the ligature for the first time, he loses not only the correct pulse but also the breathing capacity needed for the staccato and accents to sound easy.



Figure 2. I, virtuoso motif, mm. 3-4.

¹⁴ **Yehuda Gilad** is a professor of clarinet at the University of Southern California’s Thornton School of Music and the Colburn School of Music. Born in Kibbutz Gan Shmuel. His former teachers were Mitchell Lurie, Herbert Zipper, and Giora Feidman. Mr. Gilad also participated in numerous masterclasses with Sergiu Celibidache and Leonard Bernstein.

¹⁵ According to oral communication by clarinetist Yehuda Gilad at the Framnäs Masterclass on 3 April 2021.

While in this octave, the clarinetist has to solve the problem of finger technique and the associated alternation of pinky finger of the right and left hands, in the imitation of the motif an octave higher, the clarinetist has to solve problems of a more tonal nature. Therefore, I recommend practicing this position in *legato* and concentrating mainly on the notes' breathing and tonal balance (see Figure 3).



Figure 3. I, the virtuoso motif in imitation an octave higher, mm. 7-8.

The middle section *b* has a somewhat mysterious character and the tempo marking *Poco meno* (see Figure 4). However, the player should not overdo the tempo and play too slowly, as this would disturb the overall structure of the etude. At the same time, the player should choose a pleasing tone color for the entrance *pianissimo* and play all the sixteenth note figurations in the third progressions intelligibly and make a *crescendo* to *forte* on them.

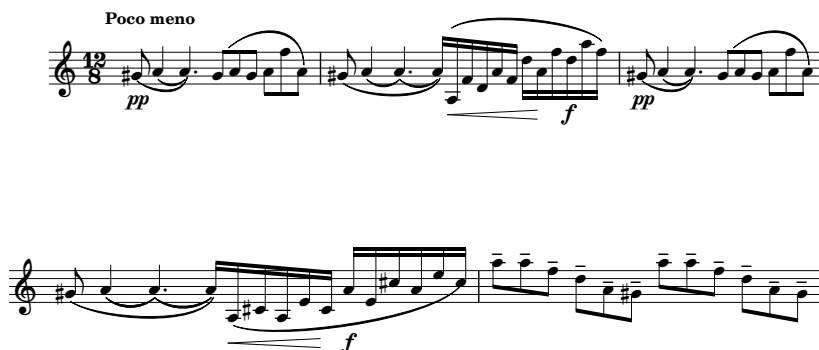


Figure 4. I, the beginning of the *Poco meno* section, mm. 48-52.

In the sixth measure of the *Poco meno* section, giant intervallic leaps over an octave appear, some even extending before two octaves (see Figure 5). These legato couplings could be more pleasant to play for any clarinetist. During rehearsal, I found it helpful to practice these three high notes separately in legato, then each tone articulated. During both variations, I focused on not moving my chin during the jumps.



Figure 5. I, large interval jumps, m. 53.

This place appears again an octave lower in measure 14 (see Figure 6). I have to say that I found this variant somewhat problematic and sometimes had to help myself within the legato by inaudibly deploying my tongue at the A5 and A3 notes' junctions.

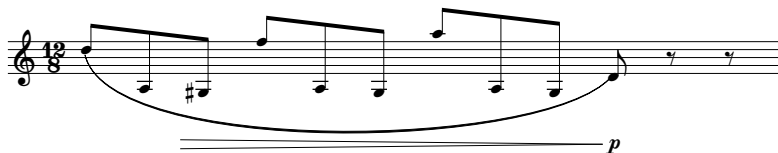


Figure 6. I, the imitation of the motif an octave lower, m. 61.

This movement also alternates legato notes with deployed notes, which help to add drama to the whole movement. The *b* section ends with three gradually fading notes with *fermatas* (see Figure 7).



Figure 7. I, Conclusion of the *Poco meno* section, mm. 60–63.

Finally, the main theme of the etude is heard with a vigorous ending on the last note (see Figure 8).

Tempo I.

The musical score consists of three staves of music in treble clef. The first staff (mm. 64-65) begins with a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic. The second staff (mm. 66-67) includes accents (>) and a forte (*f*) dynamic. The third staff (mm. 68-71) features a fortissimo (*ff*) dynamic and ends with a double bar line.

Figure 8. I, Tempo I, mm. 64-71.

Etude No. 2

Johann Sebastian Bach’s violin *Partitas* inspire the second etude. This Barock character is evident in the structure and also in the melody of the whole etude.

The etude is in the key of *D minor* and is written in the form of a theme with variations. The author has attributed this etude to the color brown.

The theme bears the tempo designation *Moderato* and has a somewhat vigorous character. The clarinetist should try to distinguish the different ways of setting the notes *tenuto* and *staccato* so that the difference is noticeable during listening. The notes in *staccato* should not, however, appear too harsh or even shouted. It is especially true from measure nine onwards for the notes A6 and G6 at the point where the main theme is heard an octave higher (see Figure 9). I practiced this place first in a slow tempo in legato, listening mainly to the quality of the tone.

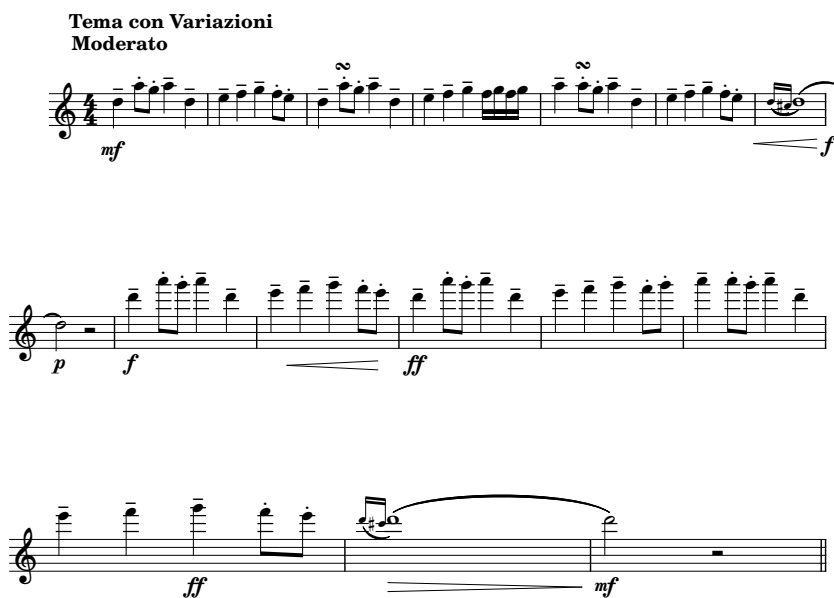


Figure 9. Etude II, Moderato theme, mm. 1-16.

In the third and fifth measures, I played the turn on the note A5 with respect to the key of *D minor* with the top note Bb. The question is whether to play this turn classically from the base note or from above. I chose both options and played the turn differently each time. The first time in the third measure, I usually played the turn from the base note, and, on the contrary, in the fifth measure, I played the turn from the top from the b note because of the repetition.

The first variation is labeled *Vivace*, and the tempo recommendation of the quarter equals 144 (see Figure 10). This is a very high tempo; for me, it was borderline playable. I recommend initially practicing all the variations at a slower tempo and gradually building up to the top tempo. During a concert performance, I choose a tempo at which I know I can play all the variations. Every variation must not be played at the same tempo, and it is not a problem to divide each variation internally by tempo. There is also the possibility to start playing the first variation slightly slower and then gradually speeding up. Each variation can start a little bit faster, and the clarinetist will achieve a natural gradation.

I. *Vivace* ♩ = 144

The musical score for Variation I, *Vivace*, measures 17-36, is presented in three staves. The first staff begins with a treble clef, a 2/4 time signature, and a key signature of one flat (B-flat). It starts with a forte (*f*) dynamic and contains eighth and sixteenth notes. The second staff continues the melody with dynamics of piano (*p*), *rit.* (ritardando), *f a tempo*, and *p*. The third staff concludes the variation with a forte (*f*) dynamic and includes first and second endings.

Figure 10. II, Variation I. *Vivace*, mm. 17-36.

Again, my biggest technical problems in this etude were the big interval jumps in legato. For example, in measures 15 and 16, I practiced all the joints slowly, aiming to make each bottom note sound as strong as the top one and adjusting my breath accordingly. Because of this point, I also had to adjust the tempo of the entire variation (see Figure 11).

The musical score for Figure 11 shows measures 31-32 in 2/4 time. It features eighth notes with slurs connecting them across measures, illustrating complicated legato connections.

Figure 11. II, the complicated legato connections, mm. 31-32.

The second variation from measure 37 is playful, and the clarinetist should feel four-bar phrases by the beautiful construction of the melody (see Figure 12).



Figure 12. II, Variation II, mm. 37-55.

The third variation has a very virtuosic character and also impresses with its drama (see Figure 13). The player should observe the prescribed dynamics, begin the variation in *forte*, and play the *subito piano* during the repetition of the motif in the fifth measure. Also, the clarinetist should achieve a light and concrete *staccato* at all volume levels. I recommend practicing this variation in *legato* throughout and in other variations of articulation.



Figure 13. II, Variation III, mm. 56–72.

At the end of the etude, the theme is heard again, which has a festive character this time thanks to the beautiful ending (see Figure 14).



Figure 14. II, Tempo I, mm. 73–79.

Etude No. 3

Etude No. 3 is one of the most difficult. The red color the composer has given to the etude is very appropriate and immediately came to my mind in this context. In the etude, he works with the cadenza theme from Alexej Fried's *Concertino for Clarinet, Piano, Percussion, and Bass Guitar*.¹⁶ It is a quotation of the "triolet passage" from m. 15 to m. 20.

In this etude, I had to solve the problem with the tone of the Eb3. The etude is not tonal, so it was often possible to replace the Eb3 with an Eb4. I always decided according to the melody and the logic of the whole phrase.

In the first movement of the *Andante*, two different expressive and technical means appear (see Figure 15). The legato arc is heard first, in which the clarinet is presented in its entirety. This arc is then interrupted by the rapid onset of sixteenth note values in the articulations of two legato and two staccato notes. It is necessary to play this place with great precision.

Figure 15. Etude III, the first part of *Andante*, mm. 1-5.

The legato arc in the first measure with the pre-beat can cause difficulties for any player, especially regarding sound balance (see Figure 16). At this point, I found it most helpful to

¹⁶ Alexej Fried (1922–2011) was a Czech composer of the "Third Stream" and conductor. He wrote many orchestral and chamber works. He dedicated his *Concertino for clarinet, piano, drums, and bass guitar* to Jiří Hlaváč.

concentrate mainly on the breath. By setting the breath correctly, the clarinetist can bring the individual notes together in a *legato* without one note sounding stronger or weaker than the other. However, everyone must address the internal correction not only with the breath but also with touch. The lips are another so-called balancing element in this case, and the breath is set similarly.



Figure 16. III, legato arc in the first measure, mm. 1-2.

I substituted the *E_b3* for the *E3* in the first measure, and in the second measure, I played *E_b4* instead of *E_b3*. In the last measure of the *Andante* section, there is possible to play all the lower notes an octave higher.

Then comes the brisk *Allegro vivo* section with the metric marking of quarter equals 120, which reminds me a little of the improvisational skills of clarinetist Eddie Daniels¹⁷ (see Figure 17).

But the whole part mainly serves for the practice of alternating the pinky motions. The aim is to get the clarinetist used to the possibility of alternating the little fingers of both hands and, for example, to be able to play the note of *E_b5*, once with the right pinky and twice with the left one. Even Robert Stark often works with this model.¹⁸

Jiří Hlaváč states that in this etude, he was trying to get the clarinetist to read the score carefully.¹⁹ The semitone shifts and changes contribute to the fact that the player is not fixated on the key and has to analyze each pattern by sight beforehand.

It is vital to stabilize the breath support regardless of whether the player is playing notes that require less or more breath. The breath column should still be the same; only the tongue determines the difference by how the tone is deployed. The clarinetist should follow the notation and play all accents that require diaphragm assistance.

I play the *E_b3* and *E3* in the first measure of the *Allegro vivo* section an octave higher. Thus, the *D#4-E4* joint is played twice in a row, enharmonically in *E_b4-E4* (see Figure 18).

¹⁷ **Eddie Daniels** (1941) is an American jazz clarinetist, saxophone player, and composer. He also performs classical music.

¹⁸ **Robert Stark** (1847–1922) was a German clarinetist and teacher. He wrote a comprehensive work *Große theoretisch-praktische Klarinett-Schule* [Great Theoretical and Practical Clarinet School]. The third part, entitled *The High School of Clarinet Playing*, contains the work *24 grosse Virtuosen-Studien*, but was also published as a book in its own right.

¹⁹ According to the oral communication of Jiří Hlaváč on 10 March 2021.

Allegro vivo
♩ = 120

mf

The musical score consists of five staves of music. The first staff begins with a dynamic marking of *mf*. The music is in common time and features a complex melody with many ornaments, including grace notes and mordents. The key signature has one sharp (F#). The tempo is marked **Allegro vivo** with a quarter note equal to 120 beats per minute.

Figure 17. III, the introduction of the *Allegro vivo*, mm. 6-14.

Allegro vivo
♩ = 120

mf

The musical score consists of a single staff of music. It begins with a dynamic marking of *mf*. The music is in common time and features a melody with ornaments, including grace notes and mordents. The key signature has one sharp (F#). The tempo is marked **Allegro vivo** with a quarter note equal to 120 beats per minute.

Figure 18. III, *Allegro vivo* movement, m. 1.

In the fifteenth measure, I played an *E_b3* an octave higher (see Figure 19).



Figure 19. III, *E_b3* in mm. 15–16.

It is followed by a section quoting the theme from the cadenza of Alexej Fried’s *Concertino for Clarinet* (see Figure 20). All trills should preferably have the same density/velocity. This aspect related to different fingering caused me technical difficulties at first. Some trills are simply played well, and some more slowly. It is where playing four changes on each trill each time helped me. In this way, I practiced the whole piece at a slow tempo and each trill separately in rhythmic changes to achieve balance. For this reason, I also tried various movements on the trills and often alternated between right and left pinky during practice.

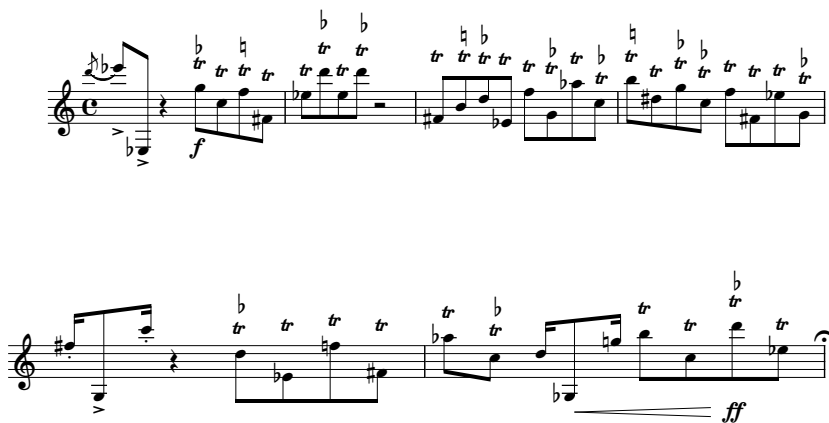


Figure 20. III, citation of the cadenza theme from Alexej Fried’s *Concertino for Clarinet*, mm. 15–22.

Practice this etude not entirely but rather by choosing approximately three lines daily and paying maximum attention to them. Throughout this exercise, the player should learn to alternate fingering where possible and to keep working with the various fingering possibilities available on the clarinet.

Etude No. 4

Etude No. 4 gives a rather carefree impression and is “colored yellow.” Jiří Hlaváč recalls how he played this etude at the exhibition opening of the painter Ota Janeček.²⁰

“Ota Janeček exhibited beautiful graphic leaves, and I know that he more or less always worked with yellow-gold and pink and then from pink to purple. At the opening of his exhibition, I played him this particular etude, and he was absolutely amazed because he had never realized that music could select or characterize colors”²¹

According to the author, the whole etude aims to create a feeling of lightness and relaxation while playing the clarinet. He says:

“One more important thing, I tried to write it so that physical fatigue would not be the final deciding factor in this etude. Because many etudes are written in such a way that you can practice many things, but you will never in your life play it with an absolute sense of lightness and ease because the etude is four pages long. Very often, the role is that you need to swallow your saliva or take a big breath now. Physical fatigue actually eliminates that.

So it’s still all meant as a kind of microstructure and an area in which one has to maintain attention and gradually build a sense of relaxation and ease. It’s not beyond the edge of physical exertion. The overall feeling at the end of it should be that you have solved a number of tactile and technical problems, like deployment, articulation, and so on, but at the end of the game, there should be a feeling, as the cooks say, that after a good meal and a proper portion you should get up from the table refreshed and rested, not that you should be taken to bed. And that’s exactly how it’s meant.”²²

The first movement has the tempo marking *Andante etereo* (ethereal, like a breeze). This etude is very melodic and has a singing character. It alternates *legato* passages with *staccato* passages. All these passages should be played with ease by the clarinetist. In the fourth measure, there is a new phrase that develops the main theme of the motif of the first phrase, and there is a variation of the motif by adding sixteenth melodic notes (see Figure 21).

²⁰ The graphic art exhibition by Ota Janeček at the Mladá Fronta Gallery in Prague in 1995. Ota Janeček (1919–1996) was a Czech painter, graphic artist, illustrator, and sculptor. In 1963 he won the first prize in Sao Paulo for the illustration of a children’s book, and in 1970, the Silver Eagle at the International Book Fair in Nice.

²¹ According to an oral communication by Jiří Hlaváč on 16 December 2020.

²² According to an oral communication by Jiří Hlaváč on 16 December 2020.

Andante etereo (étericky, jako vánek)

♩ = 86

The musical score for Etude IV, first part of *Andante etereo*, mm. 1-6, is presented in three staves. The first staff (measures 1-2) is in 4/4 time, marked *mf*. The second staff (measures 3-4) is in 3/4 time, marked *f* and *poco accelerando*. The third staff (measures 5-6) is in 4/4 time, marked *cresc.* and *ff*. The tempo is indicated as *Andante etereo* (étericky, jako vánek) with a quarter note equal to 86 beats per minute.

Figure 21. Etude IV, the first part of *Andante stereo*, mm. 1-6.

At first glance, this etude may seem quite easy, but during the exercise, I found a few problematic points in this etude as well. For example, in the fifth and sixth measures, I initially struggled with the constant alternation of sharps and natural on each note. However, if the player reads the entire piece at a slow tempo and becomes aware of the changes, this should be fine. It is then desirable to make an *accelerando* at this point and to intensify to *fortissimo* at the end of the whole movement. In addition, the enharmonic substitution should build up the player's sense of the need for color shading of a note of the same pitch but of a different notation, e.g., *Fb-E, Ab-G#*.

In the seventh measure, the following section begins with the tempo marking *Piu mosso* (see Figure 22). This movement should smoothly follow the previous movement in terms of tempo. The only surprise at this point should be the sudden piano with which the whole section begins and gradually graduates back to *fortissimo*. The theme of the etude seems to be mirrored at this point, reversed an octave lower. Whereas at the beginning of the etude, the melody of the notes *C#-F#-A#* is directed upwards, in this section, the melody is directed downwards. Similarly, in the figuration in measure 12, the tone *F#3* also appears instead of *F#4*. Here again, we can speak of the same way of phrase division as in the first movement, while the second time, the theme is also decorated with sixteenth notes.

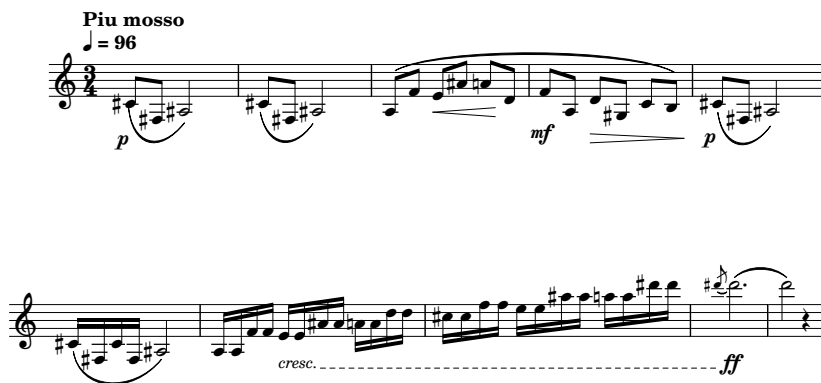


Figure 22. IV, part of the *Piu mosso*, mm. 7-16.

The repeating notes in the thirteenth and fourteenth measures should sound concretely and evenly in all registers (see Figure 23). At first, I practiced this passage separately using the widest *tenuto* possible, concentrating on the deployment of each note and gradually shortening the deployment. I then practiced the individual interval jumps as a whole series in legato (A-F-E-A#-A-D-C#-F-E-A#-A-D#-D).



Figure 23. IV, Repeated notes, mm. 13-14.

In the seventeenth measure, the *Piu vivo* section begins and becomes more dramatic (see Figure 24). The clarinetist should play all the sixteenth notes with urgency and “pull the feeling ever forward” in the eighth-note leaps in *staccato*. Moreover, the leaps mentioned above are in the interval of major seventh, enhancing their restlessness.



Figure 24. IV, the introduction of *Piu vivo*, mm. 17-25.

In measure 20, I played all the lower notes an octave higher due to the presence of the *E_b3* (see Figure 25).



Figure 25. IV, m. 20.

At measure 37, the reprise begins with *Tempo I*. The main theme and the entire *Piu mosso* section is, this time, set an octave higher (see Figure 26). We return to the original tempo of a quarter equal to 86, and the mood calms down slightly. Even though the reprise is almost identical, I saw some minor changes in the notation. For example, in measure 40, we stay in three-quarters time compared to the theme, and the melody is in the sixteenth rhythm in the third beat compared to the eighths in the opening.



Figure 26. IV, the introduction of *Tempo I*, mm. 37–40.

The biggest technical problem for me occurred in measures 41 and 42, where I had to solve the problem of the technique of the right and left pinky and the subsequent legato joints in the high position of the instrument (see Figure 27). Again, I tried to play this passage using both pinky fingers and alternating all possibilities.



Figure 27. IV, technically challenging place, mm. 41–42.

As for legato joints, I recommend in measure 42 for *F#5* using the fingering of the *E5* note followed by the *D#5*, with the addition of a *C#4/G#5* finger key with the pinky of the left hand.

The etude ends with an impressive passage of deployed notes, this time leading up to note *A#*, and it all ends when the last long note *a* in the sixth octave is heard (see Figure 28).



Figure 28. IV, final passage, mm. 49–51.

Etude No. 5

The fifth etude, *Allegro ritmico*, has been marked as “blue.” It solves the problem of the third movement from Igor Stravinsky’s *Three Pieces for Clarinet Solo*. Also, in this etude, measures of two-eighths alternate with measures of three-eighths or even three-sixteenths or five-sixteenths. It is this rhythmic sensibility that needs to be practiced in the etude.

The etude begins in a two-quarter time, which remains unchanged for the first four measures. A three-sixteenth time first appears in the fifth measure, and after that, the time

changes in almost every measure (see Figure 29). The idea is basically to get the player used to the frequent alternation of even and odd times, as Igor Stravinsky generally likes to do with this principle.

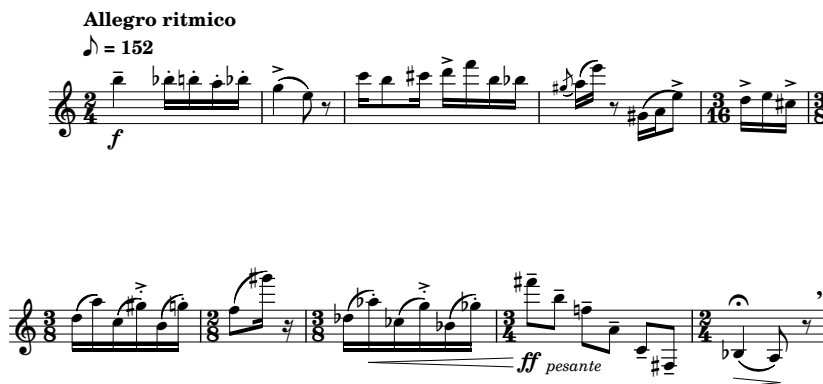


Figure 29. Etude V, the introduction of the first part of *Allegro ritmico*, mm. 1-10.

The third section of Hlaváč's Etude 5 resembles Igor Stravinsky's *Three Pieces for Clarinet*, not only in its frequent changes of time but also in its character. It also moves entirely in dynamics from *forte* to *fortissimo*, and accents and alternations of various modes of articulation occur abundantly.

Every clarinetist should be especially careful to observe all accents and deployment patterns in this etude. The accents are often placed on the easy periods, as in Stravinsky. I highly recommend that you begin practicing the entire etude at a slow tempo and not forget a single accent. If the player starts practicing the etude straight away at a fast tempo, he may not reach all the accents, and the subsequent practicing may then take longer.

Like Igor Stravinsky, Jiří Hlaváč also uses apostrophes in the etude. These should serve as a slight separation of the individual parts, but there are no long pauses.

In measures 11 and 13, I replaced the *E_b3* with an *E3* (see Figure 30).



Figure 30. V, *E_b3*, mm. 11; 13.

In measures 14–15, on the other hand, I played the *E_b3* and *E3* an octave higher to preserve the natural structure of the melody (see Figure 31).



Figure 31. V, Eb3 and E3, m. 14-15.

Almost every section of the etude ends with a slight slowdown, unlike Igor Stravinsky's *Three Pieces*. The *Pesante* marking appears for the first time in the ninth measure, followed by a *ritardando* in the twentieth measure.

After this slowdown comes to the *Meno mosso* section, which makes a furious impression on me. It is the most challenging movement of the whole etude. The unusual intervallic leaps and shifts before each note can really surprise any player (see Figure 32).



Figure 32. V, *Meno mosso*, mm. 21-35.



Figure 33. V, m. 21.



Figure 34. V, Tempo I, mm. 36-69.

In measure 21, there is possible to replace the *Eb3* with the *E3* or to play the *Eb3* an octave higher. Both options are possible in this case, but I find it more useful to play the *Eb3* an octave higher (see Figure 33).

This whole section is in *fortissimo*, and the player should certainly never take away from the volume. It is also essential to keep the correct time and all proper accents.

The fermata is followed in measure 36 by the *Tempo I* part, in which almost all the motifs used in the previous sections appear and are varied in different ways. For example, in measure 52, the main theme appears an octave lower. Then in measure 61, the main theme appears almost identical; only in measure 64, its rhythmic values are changed. While at the beginning, it is a two-quarter time, in the recapitulation, the time is changed to five-sixteenths, and the rhythm is altered to three sixteenths instead of two sixteenths and one eighth. Also, in measure 68, the accents are switched from the original light beat to the heavy beat (see Figure 34).

The clarinetist should end the etude with a particular deployment of eighth notes in tenuto throughout the instrument's entire range in the last measure.

Conclusion

I studied *Ten Virtuoso Etudes for clarinet* with their composer, clarinetist Jiří Hlaváč, who gave me much valuable advice during that time.²³ His intentions and methodological advice, supplemented by my own observations and experiences, may be valuable and stimulating for other clarinetists. From the ten virtuoso etudes for clarinet by Jiří Hlaváč, everyone can choose one etude for each week that will help them solve a technical problem they need to improve, and everyone can practice it every day. I believe that Hlaváč's compositions are among the best clarinet etudes; moreover, they are fun and a joy to practice.

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²³ I have been practicing etudes from 2019 to the present.

About the author

Anna Paulová studied at the Prague conservatory with Milan Polák and Ludmila Peterková and at the Academy of Performing Arts in Prague with Jiří Hlaváč and Vlastimil Mareš. She continued her studies at the Musikhochschule Lübeck with Sabine Meyer and Reiner Wehle. She is currently a doctoral student at the Academy of Performing Arts in Prague. She regularly performs with renowned orchestras such as the Czech Philharmonic, PKF-Prague Philharmonia, Czech Chamber Philharmonic Orchestra Pardubice, Talich Philharmonia Prague, Orchestra Sinfonica Siciliana, Münchener Kammerorchester. Her greatest success was the second prize at the Prague Spring International Music Festival in May 2015 and the first at the Bohuslav Martinů Foundation Interpretation Competition 2016. She is a special award winner – the Golden Medal (High Distinction) of the Vienna International Music Competition 2019. She advanced to the semifinals at the 68th International Music Competition ARD in Munich in 2019.

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