

## **Rolf Borch**

### **The written part of the critical reflection, May 15. 2015**

In October 2011 I started a project that was then called "Contrabass Clarinet". I wanted to become a contrabass clarinetist and expand knowledge and interest around the contrabass clarinet. Being aware that I didn't quit playing the smaller clarinets, I also wanted to become a "whole clarinetist with many main instruments".

In this text I comment on my work with my two main research questions and the two main formats in the project: The Studies and the Interpretation Experiments. I explain how the project has changed from the first revised project outline. Some of the things I write are obvious to clarinetists and the text is not as elaborate as the text in the orchestral excerpts book. It is written quite fast in the four weeks after my final concert and it has not been translated by professionals. The main part of the insight and knowledge generated in my project, is found in the Studies and Interpretation Experiments. This written part of my critical reflection is an attempt to verbalize some of this insight and my experiences when trying to become a contrabass clarinetist and a "whole clarinetist with many main instruments". It is in five parts:

1. Comments on my first research question. "How can I contribute to expanding knowledge and interest, nationally and internationally, around the contrabass clarinet?"
2. Comments on my second research question. "How will my work with the contrabass clarinet influence and enhance my identity as a clarinetist?"
3. Comments on the Studies for Houvenaghel's Organ
4. Comments on the Interpretation Experiments.
5. Project outline 2012, with my comments in May 2015.

My critical reflection is presented as:

- The Studies for Houvenaghel's Organ on the website.
- The Interpretation Experiments on the website.
- The publication: Contrabass Clarinet, Orchestral excerpts and a brief history.
- The written part of the critical reflection.

#### **1. Comments on my first research question:**

"How can I contribute to expanding knowledge and interest, nationally and internationally, around the contrabass clarinet?"

#### **The start**

The whole project can be seen as an attempt to answer this question. I wanted to present the contrabass clarinet as a versatile and manageable instrument. I had to learn to play the instrument, which included building my own sound ideal - not really knowing what a contrabass clarinet should sound like. New works were

commissioned for it, I guided the composers who wrote for it, and played it in concerts. Quantity was important to me in this part of the work, because the instrument needs repertoire and attention to gain popularity. My second supervisor Ernesto Molinari, assisted me in learning the basics of the instrument, the third and fourth register fingerings and we discussed repertoire. I also had valuable talks with clarinettist and contrabass clarinet soloist Richard Haynes, bass and contrabass clarinetist in Ensemble Intercontemporain, Allain Billard, and Paris based clarinet maker Cyrille Mercadier, among others.

### **Contrabass clarinettist in *Oslo Triptych***

The first piece I performed in the project was James Dillon's *Oslo Triptych*, with ensemble Cikada at Novembermusik in the Netherlands. I did not realize at the time how relevant Dillon's piece was. It involves the Eb, Bb, bass and contrabass clarinet. Especially the contrabass part is difficult, on the border to impossible. (It is presented in the orchestral excerpts book.) The log I wrote when we played *Oslo Triptych*, gives a clear impression of how uncertain I was as a contrabass clarinetist at the start of the project.

From the log:

Nov. 8. 2011. Before the first rehearsal with the composer:

Parts of the contrabass clarinet part is out of my reach. Playing up to D 3 is possible for me, but long passages in the piece are higher than that. I'm not comfortable with my sound between G 2 and D 3, and I can't play between D 3 and approximately Bb 3. Does this register exist at all? Above Bb 3 and presumably all the way to beyond C 5 should be possible. I am not well enough prepared for tomorrow's rehearsal, but I can not really see how I could have prepared better.

Nov. 10. 2011. After the first rehearsal with the composer:

I guess I played a little cowardly. It's difficult to keep the four instruments going throughout the rehearsal. James Dillon was kind and understanding. I have to be at the Cikada studio earlier to spend even more time warming up. I leave the contra bass clarinet and the bass clarinet in the studio, so I don't get to practice between rehearsals. On the contrabass clarinet, I am afraid to squeak, the sound is hollow and I have great difficulties in pianissimo.

Nov. 14. 2011. After the concerts at Novembermusik:

It's exhausting to travel with four clarinets. On the day of the concert, we went to the venue early in the morning and the rehearsal started in the moment I had built all the clarinets. I had more or less control on the Eb, Bb and bass clarinet but I was quite nervous about the contrabass clarinet. Maybe I should have asked for more time, but our first concert started already at 1230, so I wanted to get the rehearsal out of the way, to have time to gain control of the contrabass clarinet before the concert.

At the concert, towards the end of Dillon's *Oslo Triptych*, our conductor suddenly decided to signal for us to play extremely soft. This is an expression that we have on our repertoire, as an ensemble, but this was in the contrabass clarinet section of the piece, and at that point I had a very long D 3. When the whole ensemble suddenly played extremely soft, and I could not possibly play any softer without losing the tone, this unstable, trembling and rather sour tone became very visible to the

audience.

### **Status about the high registers today (may 2015)**

I can easily play up to F 3 and have learned to like the sound in this register. Between F 3 and Bb 3 it is difficult. From Bb 3 and upwards to C 5 is also easy, though I have not spent enough time in this extreme register to remember the fingerings. I can usually play chromatically from C 4 and down to F 3 (as I do in Study 28), but it's very hard and I would discourage composers from using this register. Possibly it can be used very deliberately, in cooperation with the clarinetist who is going to play it. (As Knut Vaage has done in *Shimmer*, that I played on the final concert.)

### **Learning to play the contrabass clarinet**

I decided to play older, classical music to learn to control the instrument, and played a Canzonetta by Frescobaldi, originally for string contrabass. I looked up the use of the contrabass clarinet in the orchestra and played this as etude material (and eventually made an orchestral excerpts book). Playing Stravinskij's *First Solo Piece* in the Interpretation Experiments, was very useful as it is demanding sound wise.

A turning point when learning the instrument came in the slow, patient work with the Studies. I became aware that my contrabass clarinet sound ideal had to be much more different, even from my bass clarinet sound ideal, than I thought it would. It is a complete different instrument than all the other clarinets. My sound engineer urged me towards "perfection" and I took pride in being able to play "perfect". A mistake that is quite common for clarinetists who learn a new clarinet, is to think that perfection of sound is Bb clarinet sound, and all other clarinets must sound as close to this as possible. The string contrabass sounds rougher than the cello and violin. I decided to allow my contrabass clarinet to have a rougher sound ideal, sometimes allowing a bit unstable sound. When choosing not to be too picky about stability of sound, I played more carefree, without getting too annoyed with the small imperfections in the sound. The strive for "perfection" without doubt, made me a better contrabass clarinetist, but I am equally sure that allowing contrabass clarinet perfection to be a bit more rough, was necessary to be able to play this instrument at all.

I did not know that the Studies would lead to so much frustration and reflection around imperfection and instability of sound on the contrabass clarinet. The recording sessions with the Studies with long notes, are probably the hardest work I did on the contrabass clarinet in the project.

### **What is a contrabass clarinet today?**

In *Contrabass Clarinet, orchestra excerpts and a brief history* I comment on this, Yet I have some additional thoughts about the instrument. I have worked a lot with my Leblanc and I know it very well. Some notes requires compensating with more or less air flow and there are irregularities in the mechanics. I know which notes that requires help in the attack and I have learned to enjoy the hollow sound and quirky timbral qualities my contrabass clarinet affords.

Trying the Eppelsheim contrabass clarinet, I was immediately impressed by the quality of sound and the mechanism. Yet, very soon I missed the timbral nuances and

the the peculiarities of my Leblanc. In the history of clarinet makers, clarinetists before me, have probably been critical to progress. Maybe clarinetists discussed whether the Bb clarinet became streamlined and "clinically in tune" when intonation and sound was improved? Some clarinetists may have thought the the bass clarinet lost its characteristic narrow timbre, when Adolphe Sax made great improvements to it, etc. If I had spend as much time as I have with my Leblanc, working on an Eppelsheim, or a Selmer, I probably would have said the same: I would have found other colors of sound, got used to different strangenesses and peculiarities and learned to like other timbral challenges. It would have been something completely different, but still a contrabass clarinet. This makes it impossible to answer the question: What is a contrabass clarinet? For me it is my Leblanc which I am still exploring and getting better at, and I am curious to see the development of the contrabass clarinet.

## **2. Comments on my second research question:**

How will my work with the contrabass clarinet influence and enhance my identity as a clarinetist?

### **The start, two statements**

Thinking about terms like "specializing", "main, second and third instrument" etc, made me make two statements that was deliberately close to impossible and perhaps a bit arrogant:

- "I don't specialize in anything - the only thing I specialize in, is not to specialize."
- "I will stop using the word second instrument, and intend to become a whole clarinetist with many main instruments."

These two statements are quite obvious and I am sure all clarinetist who play several clarinets attempt to do the same. At the same time we know that it is difficult, if not impossible. I made an honest effort to become this "whole clarinetist".

### **Specializing?**

In the Netherlands, there is a tradition for specializing in the bass clarinet. Unlike most other places one can apply at Dutch music conservatories as a bass clarinetist, without playing the Bb clarinet. This began with Harry Spaarnay who at an early age decided to quit playing his Bb clarinet and went on to become a great soloist on the bass clarinet.

Most clarinetists play Bb and A clarinet, and if they choose a second instrument, they choose either the Eb or the bass clarinet. Some clarinetists, especially freelancers, choose both.

Specializing has not been an option for me. I have never wanted to quit playing anything. My background as a freelance musician and my focus on contemporary music, made me choose both the Eb and the bass clarinet. My wish to contribute something new made me start playing the contrabass clarinet.

### **Main instruments? Revealing reed situation**

I soon discovered that I did not treat the Eb, bass, or contrabass clarinets as main

instruments. My only main instrument was the Bb clarinet. My Bb clarinet reeds was kept in a fancy, expensive reed case that measures the humidity in the air and has a sponge that I can moist if humidity gets to low. I discovered at the start of october 2011, that I had no Eb clarinet reeds, my bass clarinet reeds was lying randomly around in the instrument case and I had organized my four contrabass clarinet reeds in a rubber band that held them together. Non of this is very main instrument-like.

### **Whole clarinettist in *Oslo Triptych***

My experiences with James Dillon's piece, *Oslo Triptych*, became the starting point also for this question. It contains complex and virtuosic use of the four clarinets. Rehearsals, concerts and traveling was problematic. Four embouchures and ways of blowing should be kept under control and four reeds should be kept moist. My statement about a whole clarinetist with only main instruments was put to the test. It was even more time consuming then I thought it was going to be. Ideally I should be at the rehearsal or concert venue at least an hour before my colleagues arrive, to build and warm up the different instruments. When it came to playing the clarinet parts of Dillon's piece, I did not foresee which the actual challenges were - I practiced on the obvious difficulties, the technically demanding passages, the high register on the bass and contrabass clarinet etc. In rehearsals and especially concerts, I discovered that it was changing between the instruments that was most demanding. My ears and embouchure got confused and I did not know which pitches I was aiming for. This made the concerts exhausting and unpleasant for me. I had to create a map of the music to know in detail when to moisten reeds. For example, during a break in the first movement I moistened reeds that were not be played until fifteen minutes later. These experiences led me closer to my role as a clarinetist without second instrument.

### **Becoming a whole clarinettist with many main instruments**

The work with the Interpretation Experiments was valuable, as it was done alone, without a sound engineer, and without colleagues. I could work in my own pace and I could risk making embarrassing noises and squeaks without anyone hearing it. Likewise, recording the Studies became slow, patient exercises in which I slowly learned about changing between the clarinets by doing it a lot, and listening to the results.

More pieces have involved the contrabass clarinet and at least one more instrument. These have, as Dillon's *Oslo Triptych*, been useful as I have learned by attempting to be this "whole clarinettist" in rehearsals and concerts. The pieces have been:

C. Bauckholt: *Sog* (ensemble (Bb, bass, contrabass clarinet))\*

J. Dillon: *Oslo Triptych* (ensemble (Eb, Bb, bass, contrabass clarinet))\*

S. Hayden: *Surface/Tension* (ensemble (Eb, Bb, bass, contrabass clarinet))\*

J. E. Kaada: *Hubert, Harry, Hugo and Hogan* (solo Eb, Bb, bass, contrabass clarinet with loop pedal)\*

C. S. Mahnkopf: *Die Schlangen der Medusa* (solo Eb, Bb, bass, contrabass clarinet)

J. Ø. Ness: *Drop* (trio (cl+contrabass cl))\*

### **Status, whole clarinettist today (May 2015)**

Today, four weeks after the final concert, I let the four clarinettists make short statements. I am in a very special situation, as no other clarinets than the contrabass clarinet was played the last two months before the final concert in april 2015.

Eb clarinetist:

"I don't find it easy to motivate myself for practice unless there is a concert to prepare. There has not been occasions for me playing the Eb for a long time. Had it not been for my project, I may not have played it at all these three last years. The last time I played Eb was when recording the Bach *Fugua* for the CD *Houvenaghel's Organ*. I guess the Eb is a bit second instrument for me at the moment. I don't think it is necessary to be in good Eb shape at all times, if there is no music that requires me playing the Eb. I have good reeds, and the Eb embouchure is quite similar to the Bb, so becoming an Eb clarinetist should usually be within reach by a week or so."

Bb clarinetist:

"Not playing the Bb for two months is highly unusual for me. I have only played the contrabass and have built more muscles in my upper lip than I usually have. In the first few weeks of playing the Bb again, this gave me trouble with my lips. I was surprised by how different my embouchure was, and how long it took to rebuild my Bb embouchure. If I were to play another solo recital on the contra in the future, I would not leave the Bb completely, as I did this time. I would definitely make sure to play the Bb at least half an hour a day. I am back on Bb track now, but I admit that I was a bit worried and frustrated by the large difference and the lack of control over my lips. It is of course a problem that four clarinetists share only one set of lips."

Bass clarinetist:

"The bass embouchure is closer to the contrabass embouchure, so I am not in the same trouble as a bass clarinetist. I experienced the same upper lip problems, but they didn't make me lose control in the same way. I have good reeds, though they are still lying randomly around in my instrument case. I have started preparing the bass/contrabass clarinet part from Helmut Lachenmann's *Zwei Gefühle*, which I am soon playing with Oslo Sinfonietta, and it is going far better with the bass than the Bb. (*Zwei Gefühle* is also presented in the orchestral excerpts book)

Contrabass clarinetist:

"It has been luxurious to play only contrabass for so long! I am in great contrabass shape and I control the instrument better than ever! That does not mean that I completely control it, but I manage to make compromises. I can now, more than earlier, sense that a squeak or a bad attack is coming, and more often than before I manage to avoid the accident. This lack of complete control has become part of the exotic and fascinating attraction of playing the contrabass. I have not played the contrabass clarinet since the concert, because I have to get back on Bb track, and I don't want to maintain the muscles in my upper lip."

Whole clarinetist:

"I realize that at the end of my project, I did what I stated that I wouldn't: I specialized in playing the contrabass clarinet. And I was surprised by the amount of time and awareness my embouchure needed to come back to that of a "whole clarinetist". I conclude that I would not "specialize" if I were to play the same concert again, but definitely keep at least the Bb clarinet going. I am glad that I did it the way I did, and made these experiences.

It is a matter of attitude and logistics, to be a whole clarinetist with many main

instruments. I control my four sets of reeds and "main instrument level" is within reach during a week or two on all instruments. I have become far better at planning when I play parts with many instruments.

We are playing Dillon's *Oslo Triptych* in Oslo and Reykjavik next autumn, and I am looking forward to use my new awareness as a specialist on not specializing, in this piece again."

### **3. Comments on the Studies**

The Studies in the format Houvenaghel's Organ was made to explore the four instruments and the relationship between them: Similarities and differences, possibilities and limitations - the uniqueness of each instrument. They also show possibilities and limitations in the newer, extended techniques. The first 7 Studies contain Bbs in all registers. In the Studies 8-9 I wanted to investigate sound with the clarinets overlapping each other. Study 8, in piano, follows a path that covers the transition between all clarinets twice both ways. Study 9, in forte, is easier to follow as the pattern is: Eb-Bb, Eb-bass, Eb-contrabass, Bb-Eb, Bb-bass, Bb-contrabass, bass-Eb, bass-Bb, bass-contrabass, contrabass-Eb, Contrabass-Bb, contrabass-bass. Studies 10-16 shows the register of the clarinet family: the highest and lowest notes and two scales. Studies 17-23 show all possible combinations in different chords. Studies 24-28 are aleatoric melodies that I think show more of the "personality" of the instruments. The studies 29 – 58 examine and show the four clarinets possibilities and limitations in the extended techniques. I used the same order as the techniques are presented in Philip Rehfeldt's *New Directions for Clarinet*, and supplemented with techniques mentioned in Harry Spaarnay's *Bass Clarinet a personal story*, and some sounds I came across playing Helmut Lachenmann's *Dal Niente* and *Accanto*. Working with these studies turned out to be a valuable reality check for me, both as a contrabass clarinetist and as a "whole clarinetist".

Numerous long notes were played into microphones that were standing very close. I listened to it and became aware of all the small imperfections and noises on the Eb, bass and especially the contrabass clarinet. I argued with my sound engineer that the microphones were too close, that my sound projects to make my clarinet tone fill the hall, not to enter microphones that stand one meter away. After a lot of frustration, I decided that we needed the close microphones, as the purpose was to really get to know the clarinets. The dusty Eb clarinet sound, the bad intonation on the bass clarinet, the blurry attacks, the hollow, shaking pianissimo sound of the contrabass clarinet etc. is all part of the true story.

Acting as producer on my CD with organ music, I learned how much of this could have been fixed in the work in studio after the recording was finished. If this was going to be a CD publication, it would have been fixed. For my purpose, searching for the uniqueness of the instruments, we did not manipulate anything after we had recorded it.

I believe that the Studies as presented on the webpage can give the listener insight in the similarities and differences, and even personalities, of the four clarinets.

### **4. Comments on the Interpretation Experiments**

To investigate how I as a clarinetist changed as I changed between the clarinets, I recorded myself rehearsing and talking about the same music, on the four clarinets. I listened to the recorded material and notated what I said, and discovered that I talked mostly about sound and phrasing and used metaphors and images to describe what I wanted to do with the music.

This language that I collected is in many ways secret. It is not for the audience to know which images and metaphors I use to "charge" the music. There are many ways to say this: "Make the music into your own", "give meaning to the music" etc. The audience can obviously not hear what my images and metaphors are, but I am sure they would miss it, if I didn't "do anything with the music". This language is reserved for pedagogic situations, between teacher and student, between conductor and orchestra, or between colleagues.

The repertoire was Stravinskij's *First Solo Piece*, and *Cahier B* from *Domaines* by Boulez. More repertoire was planned in these experiments, but I found that I repeated myself when speaking, and I became too aware that I was recording myself. In stead of experimenting with more repertoire, the same method was used in experiments with the clarinet students at the Music Conservatory in Tromsø. They played Stravinskij's *First Solo Piece* and talked about the music. I asked them what they wanted to do with the music and if they imagined scenarios, characters, emotions etc. In the end, the three students received very individually different word clouds. I will continue to develop this way of working, both with myself and students.

When working with the Interpretation Experiments, I constantly had to remind myself that my aim was to learn about my four clarinetist identities. It was not meant to be mainly about the text. Yet I will not mind if people who see this part of my research, claim to have learned something about musicians use of language.

I play (at least) four clarinets and I have obtained a new awareness of my expressive possibilities and how they change with the instrument. This work, I think, will never end. There will constantly be new ways and new inspiration. After all, the instrument is not the only source of inspiration. I believe that seeing and hearing these pieces on the web site, line-by-line or with word clouds, gives a glimpse of how I think and how the four clarinets offers me different musical inspiration.

## **5. Comments on the project outline 2012**

### **From the project outline 2012:**

#### **"Main themes and research objectives**

In the project, Contrabass Clarinet, I ask two basic questions that can be considered the project's main themes:

How can I contribute to expanding knowledge and interest, nationally and internationally, around the contrabass clarinet?



How will my work with the contrabass clarinet influence and enhance my identity as a clarinetist?

The project's goal is to present the contrabass clarinet as an accessible and manageable instrument with versatile soloistic qualities, and thereby facilitate increased use of the instrument. I will commission new music for contrabass clarinet that will be presented in concerts throughout the project. These commissioned pieces will, together with performing the existing repertoire, constitute the project's artistic outcomes. Through this project, I want to highlight my range of expression as a contrabass clarinetist, and explore my development as a clarinetist while expanding my practice with this instrument. Interpretation of the repertoire and collaboration with the composers will be important processes for the artistic research in the project."

### **My comment 2015:**

I hope that I have presented the instrument as accessible and manageable. Manageable to the extent that I manage to get around the small impossibilities and "bound-to-happen" accidents, as I describe earlier in this text. I have facilitated use of the instrument by making 12 premiere performances in the project. Still I am waiting for composers to finish new music for the instrument, so the project goes on in my life after the programme and the amount of music generated by the project continues to grow.

Interpretation of the repertoire and collaboration with the composers are important processes when learning the instrument. Yet I decided, in consultation with my supervisor to remove the focus on collaboration with composers, and let the project develop into an instrument/instrumentalist project about clarinetist identities.

### **From the project outline 2012:**

#### "Background

Much of my motivation for the project is the fact that the contrabass clarinet is relatively underutilized, there are not many contrabass clarinets and few clarinetists specialize in the instrument. The contrabass clarinet is the largest and youngest member of the clarinet family. This three and a half meters long construction sounds an octave deeper than the bass clarinet, two octaves deeper than the Bb clarinet. These smaller instruments have become highly popular among composers of contemporary music, while the contrabass clarinet remains surprisingly unexplored and its repertoire is sparse. The instrument I play was built in 1972 and has been completely renovated by clarinet maker Cyrille Mercadier.

The musician has throughout the history of the clarinet taken an important part in the development of his instrument and its repertoire. Clarinetist Anton Stadler was the direct reason that Mozart wrote his two masterpieces for the instrument, the Clarinet Quintet KV 581 and the Clarinet Concerto KV 622. Similarly, Johannes Brahms had stopped composing before he met Richard Mühlfeldt, a meeting that gave rise to four of the clarinet literature and Brahms' most beautiful and powerful works, the Trio op. 114, the Quintet op. 115 and the Sonatas op. 120. During the past 50 years, the Bb

clarinet have seen a radical development of new techniques, timbres and effects; here, also, clarinetists have played a central role (Eduard Brunner for Lachenmann and Suzanne Stephens for Stockhausen). During the same period, the bass clarinet has come to prominence as a solo instrument. Partly due to the bass clarinet's obvious ability for timbral renewal, and also thanks to the efforts of bass clarinetist Harry Sparnaay who has premiered more than 500 works for bass clarinet, both solo and in different instrumentations."

**My comment 2015:**

This text is about the background for the project. I don't have any comments on this.

**From the project outline 2012:**

"Repertoire

- Existing music for contrabass clarinet

There is not much music for contrabass clarinet, but important composers such as Gérard Grisey, Franco Donatoni and Hans-Joachim Hespös have all written solo pieces, and there is also some chamber music. Interpretation of these works will be a valuable starting point for the project and will be able to say something about the roles and characters the instrument is thought to accommodate. I will also examine solo pieces and chamber music by less established composers, to acquire knowledge of the repertoire, and potentially to discover music I want to incorporate into the project. The contrabass clarinet is also occasionally used in ensemble and orchestral music. Participating in larger ensembles requires different qualities to performing solo and chamber music. It will be interesting to include the experiences I make in rehearsals and concerts while playing in larger ensembles to increase my understanding of how the instrument affects my roles as a musician in different settings."

**My comment 2015:**

I have played less of the existing music than I thought I would. I did not play Hespös, I practiced Donatoni but never performed it. This is due to lack of time, and that I didn't get as many recitals as I had hoped. I wanted to play as much new music as possible so there was never room for more than one "old" piece in the recitals. I like Grisey's pieces so much that I chose to play it as much as I could.

Playing chamber music, and with ensembles Cikada and asamisimasa, was very important when learning the instrument. I think it would have been dangerous to do this project alone, only playing solo pieces. The correction and recognition I get when relating to other musicians is important, especially when building a technique and sound on a new instrument. Playing the pieces by Gadenstätter, Dillon, Hayden and recording Grenager and Baukholt was very useful. (Except Hayden, all of these pieces are presented in the orchestral excerpts book.)

**From the project outline 2012:**

- Commissioned works

The most important way to expand the repertoire is to initiate collaborations with composers. I will commission new music for contrabass clarinet by several Norwegian and international composers. The different aesthetic traditions represented by the composers will display the instrument in a wide range of expressions. The pieces will vary in instrumentation, from concertos for contrabass clarinet and ensemble, through chamber music to solo pieces. Some of the commissioned works will involve electronics.”

**My comment 2015:**

I have done this. The list of composers have of course changed from the original plan, but I am pleased with the amount of new music that has been premiered in the project:

- C. Bauckholt: *Ohne Worte Zwei* (cello, contrabass cl. and electronics)\*
- C. Bauckholt: *Sog* (ensemble)\*
- J. Dillon: *Oslo Triptych* (ensemble)\*
- L. Grenager: *Nachts* (ensemble)\*
- L. Grenager: *Smilodon* (contrabass cl. and ensemble)\*
- S. Hayden: *Surface/Tension* (ensemble)\*
- J. E. Kaada: *Hubert, Harry, Hugo and Hogan* (solo on 4 clarinets with loop pedal)\*
- S. L. Kahrs: *O ihr Stimmen des Geschicks, ihr Wege der Wanderers* (bass cl, contrabass cl, double bass)\*
- J. Ø. Ness: *Drop* (flute, contrabass cl, piano)\*
- J. Ø. Ness: *Løen* (solo)\*
- H. Oehring: *KontraMeere* (solo)\*
- K. Vaage: *Shimmer* (solo)\*

**From the project outline 2012:**

”Collaboration with composers in the work with new pieces is an important process that may be crucial for the quality of the final work, and for its power to survive. I will describe and compare the processes in order to illuminate the relationship between composer and performer, and my role in this work. I will also invite composers to conversations about relevant issues, as this could be a strengthening expansion of the process, and thereby potentially increase the quality of the piece. Some issues have been debated before, such as communication and the composer’s intention. I also want to examine the musician’s intention, ownership of the work, idiomaticity and the work’s further life.”

**My comment 2015:**

I left this part of the project in consultation with my main supervisor, to make it a more precise project about instruments and identity.

**From the project outline 2012:**

”Interpretation of commissioned pieces and existing music will go on continuously throughout the project, and the music will be performed at concerts and festivals in Norway and Europe. This will constitute the project’s artistic outcomes. All concerts

will be documented and concert recordings of all commissioned works will be presented along with the scores.”

**My comment 2015:**

All of the music and concerts are outcome of my project that I am proud of. The quantity of music generated in my project is also an answer to my almost missionary first question ”How can I contribute to expanding knowledge and interest, nationally and internationally, around the contrabass clarinet?” I decided to make a selection of the repertoire and present four solo pieces at my final concert, together with two CD’s as my artistic outcome. All concerts are documented, but I did not find it appropriate to present all of that material to the committee.

**From the project outline 2012:**

”Contrabass clarinet and contrabass clarinetist (and Houvenaghel’s organ)

The contrabass clarinet has the status as a fourth or fifth additional instrument for clarinetists who consider the A and Bb clarinets as their main instruments. The Eb clarinet, the basset horn and the bass clarinet are more obvious secondary instruments. I will stop using the term secondary instrument and consider all the clarinets I play as my main instruments. Because the contrabass clarinet is so different from the smaller clarinets, this requires building a whole new sound ideal and, partly, a new technique. I will also map out the contrabass clarinet’s capability to meet the extended instrumental demands that exist in contemporary music today, such as multiphonics, microtonality, effects and extended playing techniques.

In addition to the technical and timbral aspects when specializing on an instrument, the contrabass clarinet brings with it a new performer identity. The instrument’s personality and unique possibilities, together with its limitations (size, mechanics, and difficulty in some registers) will form the basis for this new identity, the contrabass clarinetist. Values and timbral, technical and musical quality standards that I have acquired on the smaller clarinets make up the frames for this work. I will investigate this contrabass clarinetist identity by choosing music (etudes, parts of solo pieces and graphic scores) that I want to play on several different clarinets to illustrate how the instrument affects and inspires my musical choices and interpretations.

One consequence of expanding my practice with the contrabass clarinet is to formulate an overall musical identity as a whole clarinetist with many main instruments. In addition to knowing each instrument thoroughly, I will also examine the space between the clarinets. I will limit this part of the project to involve four clarinets: Eb, Bb, bass and contrabass clarinet.

When, in the middle of the 1930s, the Belgian acoustician Charles Houvenaghel designed and built the first playable contrabass clarinet in cooperation with the firm Leblanc, he stated that he had completed the clarinet family and had built a portable organ of clarinets. I will realize Houvenaghel’s clarinet organ by pre-recording material and cutting, pasting, mixing and manipulating the recordings. In this way, I will create pieces and studies in which I use the whole expanded gamut of clarinet sound, which is within my reach with four clarinet instruments, with a combined

range of more than six octaves. The pieces for this superclarinet will explore specific timbral and technical elements as well as different characters and expressions. I wish to examine the distances and possible connections between the four clarinets and the clarinetist identities they bring with them. It may also be interesting to play original organ music on this fictional clarinet organ.”

**My comment 2015:**

I have done this. Both the Studies, the Interpretation Experiments and this written reflection comment on this. I left the word ”Superclarinet” and used only ”Houvenaghel’s Organ”.

**From the project outline 2012:**

”In making studies and pieces for superclarinet I take both the composer’s and the performer’s role, which will give me an additional approach to my exploration of the collaboration between composer and performer.”

**My comment 2015:**

This became irrelevant when I left this part of the project.

**From the project outline 2012:**

”Other performers in the field

Few clarinetists have specialized on the contrabass clarinet. Yet there are musicians in contemporary music ensembles in Europe who work with it, and Richard Haynes, Carl Rosman, Theo Nabicht and Alain Billard are all soloists and specialists on the instrument. In Norway, Terje Lerstad have worked with the instrument and has valuable knowledge. He has published a table of fingerings for the extreme high register on the contrabass clarinet (The Clarinet, Vol. 18, No. 3, 1991). Phillip Rehfeld mentions the instrument’s register in New Directions for Clarinet (University of California Press, 1976 rev. 1994) and it has a list of multiple sounds for contra-alto clarinet which is partially transferable to the contrabass clarinet. This release is also comprehensive in its descriptions of extended Bb clarinet techniques and this concerns, to some extent, the contrabass clarinet. Harry Sparnaay recently released The Bass Clarinet, A Personal History (Periferia Music 2011) and Henri Bok has written The Bass Clarinet Manual (Shoepair Music Productions 2009). These are the most specialized publications about the bass clarinet. Sparnaay and Bok do not mention the contrabass clarinet to a greater extent than Rehfeld. Albert Rice describes the instrument’s history and historical instrument makers in the book From the Clarinet D’Amore to the Contra Bass (Oxford University Press, 2009). Clarinet makers Cyrille Mercadier and Sebastian Borsch have expertise on the mechanics of the instrument, Borsch also runs the website [contrabassclarinet.org](http://contrabassclarinet.org). All of these people will be interesting to meet for talks and sharing experience. My project has elements in common with the projects of research fellows Sunniva Rødland, Tanja Orning and Håkon Stene, all at the Norwegian Academy of Music. These will be valuable colleagues, conversation partners and potential partners in chamber music.”

**My comment 2015:**

There is not much to comment on this. I have met many of these and learned a lot from these meetings.

**From the project outline 2012:**”Outcomes and artistic presentation

My main outcomes of the project are sounding music. Commissioned works and existing repertoire will be performed in concerts throughout the fellowship period, both at the Norwegian Academy of Music and in concerts and festivals in Norway and abroad. The pre-recorded studies for superclarinet will be played at concerts and presentations. The results of mapping out the contrabass clarinet’s capability for multiphonics, microtonality, effects and new playing techniques will be documented in fingering charts and tables. I will also write articles and essays that will be published in various forums. Concert recordings, scores and my own studies and pieces will be presented as documentation of the project's artistic outcomes.”

**My comment 2015:**

Some of this is untrue. I have commissioned works and performed the existing repertoire in concerts throughout the fellowship period, both at the Norwegian Academy of Music and in concerts and festivals in Norway and abroad. I presented the Studies in concerts and presentations. I did not produce fingering charts and tables. My experience is that it differs so much from instrument to instrument and from player to player that it was not appropriate. It was more interesting to present possibilities and limitations in the Studies.

My expectations to the programme and the project, was that I would have to write a lot and conduct the project more academic. I was pleased to discover that I was encouraged to manage without too much text. Articles and essays were not written, but I produced a text about the history of the instrument. I worked hard and received a lot of help with this text, from my publisher and the translators, and I am very happy about it.

**From the project outline 2012:**”Documentation and critical reflection

The project in its entirety can be seen as an attempt to meet my first basic question, "how can I contribute to expanding knowledge and interest, nationally and internationally, around the contrabass clarinet?" Throughout the project I will find myself in situations and different phases of many parallel ongoing processes. In this project, I will choose two main approaches to critical reflection:

- The relationship between composer and performer in the collaboration on a new work.
- My identity as a contrabass clarinetist and the identity as a whole clarinetist

with many main instruments.

The first of these perspectives concerns directly my first basic question, as the work's ability to survive is related to my work with the composers. In this part of the project I choose to have a fairly broad framework for reflection, because each process is unique. Every composer has his own approach. It varies how much contact the composer wants with the performer, as will the composer's knowledge of the performer and the instrument. These processes are, however, made up of more or less the same phases and components: preparation / previous work, the composer's writing stage, workshop stages, the musician's practice and interpretation, rehearsal, concert, evaluation, and the work's further life. An important place for reflection will be the meetings between composer and performer. I will log each process closely and record workshop activities for documentation. Objects of reflection will be the composer's aesthetics, communication, the composer's intention, the musician's intention, ownership of the work, idiomaticity, and the work's power to survive.

### **My comment 2015:**

The part about the relationship between composer and performer was left out of the project.

From "Guidelines for the Norwegian Artistic Research Fellowship Programme", about critical reflection:

"Reflection is part of the artistic work. Material shall be submitted that communicates this reflection, particularly in relation to:

- the process (artistic choices and turning points, theory applied, dialogue with various networks and professional environments etc.)
- the research fellow's personal artistic position/work in relation to the chosen subject area nationally and internationally;
- how the project contributes to professional development of the subject area, including any artistic innovations."

These points are all commented on in this text, the written part of the critical reflection.

My Studies and Interpretation Experiments attempts to meet my two research question. They are more systematic parts of the process of becoming a contrabass clarinettist and a "whole clarinettist", than my practicing, rehearsals and concerts. The listener can experience insight in the four instruments and the four instrumentalists. The process is commented on earlier in this text.

My personal artistic position can be many things. I make it clear that I do not specialize, and I want a new awareness of the clarinettist who play all clarinet instruments as his main instrument, including the contrabass clarinet. This outspoken attempt to do something almost impossible is what distinguish me from my colleagues. In my project I verbalize and make systematic experiments around these themes. Do not get me wrong: I am absolutely certain that my colleagues take all of their clarinets, including their contrabass clarinets, just as seriously as I do.

I described the history of the contrabass clarinet and my motivation and experiences with the instrument, in the orchestral excerpts book. In my project description (2012) I write more about my background and motivation, and about other performers playing contemporary music on the contrabass clarinet, some specializing in bass and contrabass clarinet, others playing all clarinet instruments. To make a complete list of my contrabass clarinetist colleagues is impossible, someone would always be left out, so I have not attempted to do so.

The whole project is an attempt to contribute to professional development of the subject area. This is commented on only a few times. I *do* obviously hope this project can contribute to clarinetists and contrabass clarinetists and expand knowledge and interest around the contrabass clarinet.

**From the project outline 2012:**

In working with my musical identities, the framework will be more fixed. In the exploration of my identity as a contrabass clarinetist, where I play the same music on many clarinets, the reflection will take place in practice and interpretation of the repertoire. In practice, I am an instrumentalist, and the piece's technical and timbral elements and challenges will be examined. In interpretation, I am a musician, and objects of reflection will be the musical inspiration in the instrument and in the score, my musical choices, phrasing, the instrument's limitations, unexpected problems and positive surprises. Practice and interpretation will be recorded for documentation, and my comments during the recordings will be aligned with my thoughts and experiences in retrospect.

**My comment 2015:**

I have done this. My main formats for presenting this is on the website. I also comment on these themes in this text. When I wrote this, I probably thought I was going to present more text, but again I am glad I chose not to.

**From the project outline 2012:**

In laboratory experiments with pre-recorded sound material from several clarinets, I will work outside the repertoire and make studies that investigate more closely specific musical and instrumental elements. Based on these studies and my experiences in practice and interpretation, I will create larger pieces in which multiple instruments and identities will be coordinated to a greater musician identity, a whole clarinetist. Reflection will take place in preparation and recording of the various instruments, and in listening, editing, mixing and manipulation of the recorded material.

**My comment 2015:**

I made the Studies, but I did not make "larger pieces in which multiple instruments and identities was coordinated to a greater musician identity". I honestly don't understand what I imagined this to become. However, the CD *Houvenaghel's Organ*, came quite close to what I describe. I did spend a lot of time in studio, and learned a great deal from that work.



**From the project outline 2012:**

I will present the reflection as a live concert essay that will contain musical elements from the project. Relevant components for the concert essay are: repertoire, my pre-recorded studies and pieces, recorded documentation of practice, interpretation and workshops with composers as well as live and pre-recorded text. The concert essay can be supplemented with written material.”

**My comment 2015:**

This is not far from what became the truth. I came quite close, in march 2012, in deciding/predicting what I was going to do on stage in april 2015.