

Kycia, Carol Anne. *Daniel Bonade: A Founder of the American Style of Clarinet Playing*. Captiva, FL: Captiva Publishing, 1999. ix + 176 pp. Index of Interviews. Photographs. Softcover, (no ISBN), \$35.95 (available through Van Cott Information Services)

Daniel Bonade (1896-1977) was born in Geneva to parents who had both won first prizes at the Paris Conservatory—his father in clarinet (he later also became a conductor) and his mother in piano and voice (she became an opera singer). Bonade's first clarinet teacher was Ferdinand Capelle, a former student of the famous French master Henri Lefébvre, who had studied with another French master, Cyrille Rose. Bonade later studied with Lefébvre himself, whom he called his "most important teacher."

Daniel Bonade also won first prize at the Paris Conservatory, in 1913. In 1915, he performed as solo clarinetist with the famous Paris-based Garde Républicaine Band at the Panama-Pacific Exposition in San Francisco. He returned to the United States in 1916, where he performed as a freelance musician with the Diaghilev Ballets Russes, the Victor Herbert Orchestra, and the Sousa Band, among other engagements.

He became principal clarinetist in the Philadelphia Orchestra in late December 1916, after conductor Leopold Stokowski had dismissed most of the orchestra's Germans when the United States entered World War I. He continued as Philadelphia's principal clarinetist from 1917-22 and 1924-30. He played second clarinet in the New York-based CBS (Columbia Broadcasting System) Orchestra from 1930-33, and was principal clarinetist in the Cleveland Orchestra from 1933-41. He also played under Arturo Toscanini in the NBC (National Broadcasting Company) Symphony on a tour of South America in the summer of 1940. He stopped performing in principal positions in 1941, at the age of forty-five. From then until 1960, he played second clarinet for the CBS Orchestra, the Bell Telephone Hour, the Voice of Firestone radio program, and other groups and programs.

Bonade married an artist, Baroness Maud Gladys Grenier, in New York on his twentieth birthday (in 1916). They owned and lived part of the time in an old house on a farm in New Hope, Pennsylvania. From the 1920s until they retired to France in 1960, the Bonades split their time between their farm, downtown Philadelphia, and another

residence overlooking New York's Central Park (Mrs. Bonade never resided in Cleveland). From 1960 until his death in Cannes in 1976, the Bonades lived in their castle in Civaux in the summers and in Cannes in the winters.

Bonade became the first clarinet teacher at the Curtis Institute of Music in the institution's first year, 1924. He was on the faculty of the Cleveland Institute of Music during his years in that city, and taught full-time at the Julliard School of Music from 1948-59. He also taught hundreds of private students at his downtown studio during his New York years (1941-60).

Daniel Bonade was widely regarded as a truly great clarinetist. When he first arrived in the United States, he produced a "French" sound that was somewhat lighter than the dark German sound then the norm in major American orchestras. He was also known for his phrasing and flawless technique. Perhaps his greatest claim to fame was his roster of students, which at one time included most of the best clarinetists in the United States. In short, he became the most influential American clarinet teacher of his generation.

When Bonade's career began American orchestras still relied heavily on European players, but by the time it ended most positions were filled by Americans. Apparently, Bonade did more than his share to help bring that change about, because by the 1950s most clarinet positions in major American orchestras were filled by his students. Following is a partial list of Bonade students who were or became famous clarinetists and teachers: Ben Armato (Metropolitan Opera), Clark Brody (Chicago Symphony), Larry Cocaner (U.S. Army Field Band, Denver Symphony, National Symphony), Edmund Chassman (Buffalo Philharmonic, Los Angeles Philharmonic), Ron de Kant (New Orleans Symphony, Vancouver Symphony), David Dworkin (Metropolitan Opera), Anthony Gigliotti (Philadelphia Orchestra), Roger Hiller (Houston Symphony, Metropolitan Opera), Leon Lester (Philadelphia Orchestra), Mitchell Lurie (Pittsburgh Symphony, Chicago Symphony), Robert Marcellus (Cleveland Orchestra), Robert McGinnis, (Philadelphia Orchestra, New York Philharmonic, San Francisco Symphony, Cleveland Orchestra, NBC Symphony), Bernard Portnoy (Cleveland Orchestra, Philadelphia Orchestra), James Rettew (Cleveland Orchestra), Leon Russianoff (one of the greatest teachers), Emil Schmachtenberg (Cincinnati Symphony), Steve Kowalski (U.S.

Army Band), T. Selby (Dallas Symphony), Jules Serpentine (Philadelphia Orchestra), Robert Swanson (National Symphony), and Alfred Zetzer (Kansas City Philharmonic, Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo, Pittsburgh Symphony, San Antonio Symphony, Cleveland Orchestra). The list could go on and on. One former student remembered that Bonade would not take Benny Goodman as a student, but the author of the book was unable to confirm that bit of information.

The author, Carol Anne Kycia, gathered some of her information from archival sources at the Curtis Institute, the Julliard School, and other places, and some from Bonade's numerous but brief published writings. However, she acquired most of the information through more than seventy interviews with Bonade's former students and colleagues. She conducted a few of those interviews by telephone and letter, but most were done in person. A partial list of interviewees who were former colleagues of Bonade and where they worked together includes: Vincent Abato, clarinet (Voice of Firestone-also a Bonade student); Julis Baker, flute (Cleveland Orchestra, CBS Orchestra); Joseph Fuchs, violin (Cleveland Orchestra); Mitch Miller, oboe (CBS Orchestra); Sol Schoenbach, bassoon (CBS Orchestra); and Artie Shaw, clarinet (CBS Orchestra).

The book consists of an introductory chapter in which the author gives an overview of Bonade's career, and background information on German, French, Russian, and American styles of clarinet playing, including discussions about a few selected other famous players and teachers in the United States during Bonade's career. The second chapter, entitled "Bonade's Influence," deals with French and American "schools" of clarinet playing, different types of instruments, "Why Bonade had successful students," reasons for his leaving the Philadelphia Orchestra and Cleveland Orchestra, an overview of his published articles and his famous *The Clarinetist's Compendium*, Bonade's fame as player and teacher, and a section on "Bonade's students as teachers."

Chapter Three is about Bonade's methods of teaching, including many technical aspects of his playing and teaching such as "Mouth," "Breath and Tone," "Fingers," "Phrasing," and "Vibrato." Chapter Four consists of anecdotes about Bonade's private lessons, and his attitudes and approaches toward "other" instruments and music (i.e., A, E-flat,

and bass clarinets, saxophones, and jazz), warm-ups, repertoire, memorization, reed adjustment, and equipment. This chapter concludes with a discussion of his placement of students in playing and teaching positions.

Chapter Five is about Bonade's personality, recreation habits, and "Questionable dealings" with students and others. The final chapter consists of a running narrative about Bonade and his students, organized chronologically by his physical location over the years. Next come lists of Bonade's in- and out-of-print publications, recordings, magazine articles, and interviews conducted for this study. Then there is an index of interviewees, an appendix (with unnumbered pages) consisting of photocopies of various documents (e.g., contracts, letters, advertisements), and finally a list of illustrations.

While still an active clarinetist, this reviewer studied with two of Bonade's "grandstudents"—themselves former students of Bonade students Robert Marcellus and Mitchell Lurie. I also studied with a former student of Ulysses Delecluse, the famous Paris Conservatory clarinet teacher in the 1950s. According to the author, Bonade's tone became "larger" while playing under Leopold Stokowski in the Philadelphia Orchestra, and he eschewed the later "French" school of clarinet playing of Delecluse and his followers. These two schools of playing, that of Bonade (the "old" French tone that Bonade modified into an "American" tone) and that of Delecluse (the "new" French tone with its brilliant tone and emphasis on technical facility), contrasted radically, even as late as the 1970s when I studied both. However, as the author points out, differences in styles of orchestral clarinet playing became less pronounced than they were during Bonade's initial years in the United States, due in no small measure to his influence.

The author provides other information and insights that this erstwhile clarinetist found fascinating. They are too numerous to discuss here, so a few examples must suffice. First, former students (and colleagues) view Bonade as a great player and teacher. His tone was perceived as somewhat thin and "buzzy" up close, but the sound projected to the last row of large concert halls, and it seemed to some to become louder and stronger the further it traveled. He played with a very subtle vibrato for purposes of phrasing, but he did not call it vibrato and did not teach vibrato as such. Most acute listeners described his tone as having "life," with no specific mention of vibrato,

and all referred to what they considered his magnificent playing. He played and helped popularize Buffet clarinets that were made by a small French company, whereas at the time of his emigration from France most major American orchestral players used clarinets made by the Selmer Corporation. Bonade reportedly preferred the stronger (wind) resistance of the Buffet instruments, and was less concerned about the reputedly unreliable intonation of the Buffet clarinets, which he could control.

Apparently, Bonade loved to play pranks, and there is speculation that Stokowski dismissed him from the Philadelphia Orchestra for placing a caricature of the famous conductor above a restroom urinal. The author believes that "Stokey" engaged a handwriting expert to examine the offending drawing, and thereafter fired both Bonade and principal trombonist Gardell Simons. The author discusses several other possible reasons why Bonade left that orchestra. His reasons for ending his career as a principal player in 1941 seem clearer, but even in that case opinions differ. Bonade told people that he no longer wanted to undergo the pressure of a principal performing role, but there is speculation that his health may have been beginning to fail, and that he received pressure from his wife to reduce his performing regimen.

There is much material in the book about Bonade's approaches to tonguing, phrasing, reeds, equipment, and many other aspects of his playing and teaching. As for teaching, Bonade had a tendency to teach the same material in the same order to all students. He also categorized students by potential and told various individuals that they could become principal players, they could become second players, or that he could not help them. He focused on scales, thirds, arpeggios, and etudes, not literature, and rarely taught even orchestral excerpts. He had students go through the famous (Cyrille) Rose etudes carefully, sometimes twice, which could take years.

Bonade was a very large man physically and an authoritarian in his approach to teaching. He is also remembered as having been extremely intelligent, an analytical teacher who devoted exceptional energy to his teaching. Many of his former students recalled that he could identify and correct performance problems that escaped other teachers. He was famous for his ability to adjust reeds, but he did not teach those techniques to his students, generally. He is described as having the

“talent and drive as a teacher to . . . [establish] an American school of clarinet playing” (p. 15).

Several former students commented that Bonade drank and smoked during lessons, often drank alcohol before performances, and gambled. Most said that he was not a heavy drinker, but that he loved liverwurst and pizza and other unhealthy foods. He was considered “God” by many, but most found him warm and occasionally social. Today, many if not most of his former students remember him as their best clarinet teacher, although he did not teach certain aspects of performance at all (e.g., breathing and breath support).

Bonade was warm and engaging in lessons, but he expected students to be prepared and to appear on time. At times, especially while in New York, he would teach lessons as late as midnight due to his busy performing and teaching schedule. Students wanted so badly to study with him that they arranged to be there at Bonade’s convenience. He would end lessons prematurely by smiling and closing the students’ music when they presented themselves unprepared.

There was also a “dark side” to Daniel Bonade. Some remember him as an extremely generous man. However, others maintained that he was unscrupulous in some of his dealings. For example, apparently he acquired large quantities of reeds while on his annual summer trips to France. (His sister married Henri Lefebvre in 1917, and kept her husband’s reed factory after he died in about 1923 until her death in 1955.) Several former students allege that Bonade sold his students boxes of reeds after he had picked over them. (Bonade said that one should select reeds made in the morning, when the production knives were still sharp.) A few believe that Bonade engaged American sailors to smuggle clarinets from France, and that he met ships at the New York harbor wearing a large overcoat to hide the instruments he took illegally from the ships. He then reputedly sold these instruments to students at a large profit. Other students said that he helped them acquire instruments at affordable prices.

Bonade also allowed some students to work on his New Hope, Pennsylvania Christmas tree farm in return for their clarinet lessons. Some of these students report positive experiences from the Bonade hospitality as well as the lessons, but several others felt exploited because they perceived that he expected them to work unreasonably

hard on the farm. Many also maintained that the Bonade brand reeds were inferior, and claimed that he insisted that they play them. Several said that they played Bonade reeds only for their lessons with him. Similarly, some believe that he became a representative for the LeBlanc Corporation only for money—that he continued to prefer Buffet clarinets.

Apparently, Bonade and his wife enjoyed a “lavish” lifestyle, although he could be a “real skinflint.” The author uncovered evidence that the couple lived very lavishly after retiring to France, but also that they became short of funds near the end of his life.

On the other hand, Bonade was active during a period when many orchestral positions were filled after a conductor made a telephone call to someone he respected. In many cases, that person was Daniel Bonade, and not only for clarinet positions. It is said that Stokowski and other conductors would call him and accept his recommended candidates sight unseen. He had considerable power, but some former students claimed that he used this power to control and manipulate their careers.

This is a fascinating book for anyone interested in clarinet playing and teaching, past or present, and for those interested in the life and career of a giant of a figure in the American orchestral world in the twentieth century. Daniel Bonade appears to have been an enigma, but an entertaining one.

Daniel Bonade: A Founder of the American Style of Clarinet Playing apparently began as a doctoral dissertation by the same name (D.M.A., Boston University, 1997). Curiously, this fact is not mentioned in the book. Regardless, the book still reads like a doctoral dissertation, one that needs considerable editing. The amount of redundancy between chapters and even sections within chapters is overwhelming to the reader at times, and the organization between and within chapters leaves much to be desired. Moreover, the author appears not to have found information from sources other than those described above. For example, court records could confirm or disconfirm such issues as the date of Bonade’s marriage and his property holdings. There is little information about Bonade’s life in France, before or after his career in the United States.

Due to the book’s disorganization and generally disjoint and choppy qualities, the reader must work harder than necessary to learn

important and entertaining things about Daniel Bonade's life and career, and to gain historical perspectives about the world of American clarinet playing and major orchestras during the period when both gained de facto independence from European influences. For those with a passion for the world of the clarinet, the read is well worth the effort.

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