**Same Proportions! Same Story!: Buster Keatons Film Steamboat Bill, Jr. and Magnus Lindbergs Duo for Clarinet and Cello Steamboat Bill Junior**

ClarinetFest® 1999

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| Reaching across an ocean, 62 years, and two genres, the award-winning Finnish composer Magnus Lindberg created a clarinet/cello duo for clarinet virtuoso Kari Kriikku that was influenced by a Buster Keaton silent film. Keaton's 1928 film Steamboat Bill, Jr. and Magnus Lindberg's 1990 clarinet/cello duo, Steamboat Bill Junior share remarkably similar durational proportions among their sections even though the entire works are of greatly dissimilar lengths. The film is 70 minutes and the duo is only eight. Both the silent film and the duo divide into four sections that I have labeled: "Exposition of Characters," "Scherzando," "Largo," and "Agitato." The tempo markings in the duo's score dictate the real-time length of each section and therefore the proportion of each section to the whole. The sections of the film, and therefore the film's internal proportions result from changes of scene and action. In the table below are the proportional durations of the four dramatic sections in the film and in the duo: |
| |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | | *Section* | *Title* | *Duo* | *Film* | | 1. | "Exposition of Characters" | 42.6% | 46.4% | | 2. | "Scherzando" | 12.8% | 12.9% | | 3. | "Largo" | 24.9% | 22.9% | | 4. | "Agitato" | 19.9% | 17.9% | |
| In my presentation at ClarinetFest® '99, I showed through video and recorded musical excerpts that the film and the duo have four analogous sections and that the music of the duo reflects the action of the film's main events. The four sections of the film and of the duo are organized in the style of a modified sonata cycle. The "Exposition of Characters" in the film introduces the contrasting characters and their intermingled relationships. Likewise the "Exposition of Characters" in the duo introduces the contrasting instruments and the musical materials. The "Scherzando" in the silent picture portrays the central conflict between Steamboat Bill and his son (Buster Keaton), just as the clarinet and cello are portrayed in opposition to each other with rhythmically balanced gestures in the duo's "Scherzando." The special sound world of the duo's slow and expressive "Largo" results primarily from the cello's use of harmonics. The music is purposely static and reflects the "Largo" section of the film where Steamboat Bill is held in jail in a similar static condition. The climax of the film occurs in the "Agitato" section with a cyclone that launches trees and buildings through the air. Lindberg labeled the corresponding section of his duo "Agitato." In his music the clarinet and cello rush in rapid 32nd notes in a minimalist fashion.  Lindberg's Steamboat Bill Junior is an exciting addition to the Clarinet repertoire. It is all the more interesting because of its correspondence to Buster Keaton's 1928 silent film.  Solo and chamber works by Magnus Lindberg that include clarinet: |
| |  |  | | --- | --- | | Arabesques | Wind Quintet, 1978. | | Quintetto dell'estate | Flute, clarinet, violin, cello and piano, 1979. | | Linea d'ombra | Flute, saxophone (or clarinet), guitar and percussion, 1981. | | Action - situation - signification | French horn (or clarinets), piano, percussion, cello and tape, 1982. | | Kraft | Clarinet, cello, percussion, piano and electronics with orchestra, 1983-85. | | Ur | Clarinet/bass clarinet, violin, cello, double bass, piano/electronic keyboards and live electronics, 1986. | | Ablauf | Clarinet/bass clarinet and two bass drums, 1983/88. | | Steamboat Bill Junior | Clarinet and cello, 1990. | | Duo Concertante | Clarinet and Cello solo, with chamber ensemble of flute, oboe/English horn, mandolin, guitar, vibraphone, harp, viola and double bass, 1990/1992. | | Clarinet Quintet | Clarinet and string quartet, 1992. | | Away | Clarinet with orchestra, 1994. | |
| The works listed above are available from Edition Wilhelm Hansen AS, Bornholmsgade 1, DK-1266 Copenhagen, or the Finnish Music Information Centre, Lauttasaarentie 1, 00200-Helsinki.  **Sources**  **Film**  Keaton, Buster. *Steamboat Bill, Jr.* Directed by Charles F. Reisner with organ score by Gaylord Cater. 70 min. Black and White. Buster Keaton Productions Inc./United Artists, 1928. Kino Video, 1990. Video cassette.  **CD**  *Finnish Clarinet, The*, Gregory Barrett, clarinet; Helen Lindén, cello; and others, ALBA CD-126, Tampere, Finland, 1998. [http://www.alba-record.fi/](https://web.archive.org/web/20120417124300/http:/www.alba-records.fi/)  **Dissertation**  Barrett, Gregory M. "Solo and Chamber Works for Clarinet by Contemporary Finnish Composers Paavo Heininen, Magnus Lindberg, and Jukka Tiensuu: An Analysis for the Performer." D.M. dissertation, Indiana University, 1998. |

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