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# THE LIFE AND WORK OF ALEX KLEIN

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**THE LIFE AND WORK OF ALEX KLEIN**

**Ramon Thiago Mendes de Oliveira**

**A Doctoral Research Project submitted to the  
College of Creative Arts  
at  
West Virginia University  
In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Musical Arts  
in  
Performance**

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Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Strauss Oboe Concerto, FEMUSC

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## ABSTRACT

### THE LIFE AND WORK OF ALEX KLEIN

**Ramon Thiago Mendes de Oliveira**

Alex Klein is one of the best-known figures of the American oboe school. He is the winner of multiple international competitions, including the first prize at the Geneva's *Concours International d'Execution Musicale*. Appointed principal oboe at the Chicago Symphony Orchestra in 1995, Klein is one of the most highly regarded musicians hired during the Barenboim era. His recording of Richard Strauss' oboe concerto with the CSO was awarded *Best Instrumental Soloist Performance (with Orchestra)* at the 44th Grammy Awards. In 2004, his tenure at CSO was interrupted due to the onset of Focal Dystonia; which affected multiple fingers in his left hand. After his resignation, Klein entered in a period of adaptation to the effects of the disorder and learned how to cope with them. Klein continued his career as chamber musician, recitalist, soloist, teacher, conductor, and recording artist. In 2016, Klein was re-appointed principal oboe at the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and was given the *Principal Oboe Emeritus* status by CSO's music director Riccardo Muti one year later. This research document is based on published interviews, press releases, academic and non-academic articles, recording and concert reviews, published writings, institutional and personal websites and archives, program and booklet notes, and it was complemented by multiple discussions with Alex Klein in fall 2018. It compiles Klein's most significant events in life and his most important professional achievements. The results of this research are presented in a chronologic fashion and include details about Klein's early studies, his transition to the USA, his professional career, the onset of Focal Dystonia, and his return. It also includes an interview with Alex Klein, a selective discography containing some of Klein's most significant recordings, and a summarized timeline.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Ramon Thiago  
February 2019

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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

Alex Klein is one of the best-known figures of the American oboe school.<sup>1</sup> He is the first prize winner of multiple international competitions such as the *Lucarelli International Competition for Solo Oboe Players* (1986), the *Fernand Gillet Performance Competition* (1986), and the Geneva's *Concours International d'Execution Musicale* (1988), and he started his professional career as chamber musician, recitalist, soloist, and teacher. Klein's first professional appointment in an orchestra was the principal oboe chair at the Chicago Symphony Orchestra in 1995. His 1998 recording of Richard Strauss' oboe concerto with the Chicago Symphony was awarded *Best Instrumental Soloist Performance (with Orchestra)* at the 44th Grammy Awards. Further, Klein is considered "one of the most highly regarded of the forty musicians hired during the Barenboim era" at the Chicago Symphony Orchestra.<sup>2</sup>

Alex Klein held his position with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra until 2004 when, at the zenith of his career, he was forced to step down and resign due to the onset of Focal Dystonia. The following years were a time of discovery and Klein had to reinvent himself as artist and as person. Dealing daily with an incurable neurological disorder, he learned how to cope with its limitations and started new paths in his career. Since then, Klein developed a worldwide career as an orchestra conductor and founded multiple music festivals and social projects. Also, he continued his career as recitalist, soloist, and recording artist.<sup>3</sup> Alex Klein's complete discography includes over 50 albums and, as a complete artist, he has recorded in many

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<sup>1</sup> Geoffrey Burgess and Bruce Haynes, *The Oboe*, (London: Yale University Press, 2004) 205.

<sup>2</sup> Alex Klein, Christoph Eschenbach, Chicago Symphony Orchestra, *Soloists of the Orchestra III*, CD, Chicago: Chicago Symphony Orchestra, 2007, booklet: 6.

<sup>3</sup> See Selective Discography.

genres and in many roles: as symphony orchestra oboist, as concerto soloist, in chamber music, in unaccompanied oboe repertoire, and as a conductor. Against the odds, in 2016 Alex Klein re-auditioned for the same position with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and was appointed principal oboe for the second time. However, instead being awarded tenure, this time Klein received the *Principal Oboe Emeritus* status from the CSO's music director Riccardo Muti.

In 2018, Klein was appointed principal oboe at the Calgary Philharmonic Orchestra in Canada. In addition to his orchestral career, Klein maintains an active career worldwide as teacher, recitalist, soloist, competition juror, conductor, and social entrepreneur.

This research paper compiles information found in published interviews, press releases, academic and non-academic articles, recording and concert reviews, published writings, institutional and personal websites and archives, program and booklet notes, and is complemented by multiple discussions with Alex Klein in fall 2018. It presents Klein's most significant events in life and his most important professional achievements. The results of this research are presented in a chronologic fashion and include details about Klein's early studies, his transition to the USA, his professional career, the onset of Focal Dystonia, and his return to professional activity as a world-class oboist. Also, it includes an interview with Alex Klein, a selective discography containing some of Klein's most significant recordings, and a summarized timeline.



## CHAPTER 2

### ALEX KLEIN'S BIOGRAPHY

#### Early studies in Brazil<sup>4</sup>

The son of José Felipe Klein and Ruth Klein, Alexandre Klein was born on December 4, 1964 in Porto Alegre, the capital of Rio Grande do Sul, a southern state of Brazil. Klein is the youngest of three boys, and in the late 1960's the family moved to Curitiba, Paraná, in Brazil.<sup>5</sup> At a young age, Alex was an energetic, distracted, and easily bored student. Because of his behavior, in 1974, he was at risk of expulsion from school. His concerned father, José, went to talk with the school's authorities to resolve this issue and, together with the school's counselor, they decided that young Klein needed to attend extracurricular classes in arts or sports to burn out the excessive amount of energy. In the same year, Klein attended for the first time an orchestra performance and, among the pieces performed, Klein heard an oboe concerto. Amazed by the sound of an instrument that overpowered the entire orchestra and intrigued by the small reed, Klein decided he wanted to play the oboe.<sup>6</sup>

At the time, the local oboe teacher João Ramalho insisted that Klein should start with an instrument of good quality; otherwise, Klein would likely abandon the oboe. For this reason, during a local music festival, Klein's parents spoke with Ingo Goritzki, who helped them order a professional-quality oboe from Püchner in Germany.<sup>7</sup> However, at that time, Brazil was under a military dictatorship and processing goods through customs was impossible. Under those circumstances, they decided that it would be wiser to ship the instrument through the private

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<sup>4</sup> Alex Klein, in discussion with the author, October 2018.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ingo Goritzki is a German worldwide-known oboist and teacher. Biography available at: "Ingo Goritzki," *Naxos Records*, accessed October 30, 2018, [https://www.naxos.com/person/Ingo\\_Goritzki\\_7801/7801.htm](https://www.naxos.com/person/Ingo_Goritzki_7801/7801.htm).

courier of Curitiba's Goethe Institut to avoid regular customs. Nonetheless, this process would take up to eighteen months.<sup>8</sup>

In the meantime, Klein enrolled in the Instituto Nossa Senhora das Mercês, where he began lessons on the recorder and in music theory. From the beginning, he insisted on playing the recorder with left and right hands exchanged and his progress was rapid. In a few weeks, he was already transcribing Mozart's *Symphony No. 40* by ear. At the end of 1974, Klein was performing with the Youth Orchestra of the Federal University of Paraná, playing the piccolo part on a soprano recorder, under the direction of Mrs. Hildegard Soboll Martins.<sup>9</sup>



Figure 1 - Alex Klein playing recorder with the position of the hands exchanged. Photo from Klein's personal archive.

The next year, 1975, Klein entered the extension program of the conservatory of music at the Escola de Música e Belas Artes do Paraná, studying oboe with Professor João Ramalho. As

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<sup>8</sup> Klein, in discussion with the author, October 2018.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

part of his initial oboe study, Klein put down the recorder for the entire month of February so he could have the time to forget the exchanged-hands technique and begin playing the oboe fresh with the correct hand position.<sup>10</sup>

Klein did not have his own instrument and during the first months of lessons Professor Ramalho lent his own oboe to Klein during lessons. At home, Klein practiced with the reed alone.<sup>11</sup> In July of 1975, Klein finally received his first oboe. Shortly after, because of Professor Ramalho's retirement, Klein started taking lessons with the oboists Harold Emert and Tsunemichi Nagamine at the conservatory. In addition, Klein's mother travelled regularly with him to the city of São Paulo, seven hours away, to take private lessons with Salvador Masano, principal oboist of the São Paulo Philharmonic Orchestra.<sup>12</sup> In 1976, Klein joined the *Camerata Antiqua de Curitiba*, a professional ensemble that specialized in Renaissance and Baroque repertoire.<sup>13</sup> Turning twelve the next year, Klein started traveling to São Paulo alone. A few years later, he started to take private lessons with Luis Carlos Justi, a former student of Ingo Goritzki, in Campinas, São Paulo state.<sup>14 15</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> The technique called by Alex as "forgetting technique" accompanies him throughout his entire career and he also teaches it to his students to fix bad habits. Alex Klein, text messages to author, October, 2018.

<sup>11</sup> According to interview realized in June, 2002. Bruce Duffie. "Oboist Alex Klein," *Bruce Duffie*, accessed October 30, 2018, <http://www.bruceduffie.com/klein.html>

<sup>12</sup> Salvador Masano was the principal oboe of the *São Paulo* Philharmonic Orchestra and the Symphony Orchestra of the *Teatro Municipal* of *São Paulo*. Also, Masano was Professor of Oboe at the University of *São Paulo*. Biography available in Portuguese at: Salvador Masano. "Salvador Ilson Masano," *Salvador Ilson Masano*, accessed October 30, 2018, <https://salvadorilsonmasano.wordpress.com/>.

<sup>13</sup> The *Camerata Antiqua of Curitiba* is a professional group - chamber orchestra and choir - founded in 1974. Initially, the *Camerata* specialized in renaissance and baroque repertoire. Nowadays, The *Camerata* is also a reference for contemporary music. More information available in Portuguese at: "Camerata Antiqua de Curitiba," *Fundação Cultural de Curitiba*, accessed October 30, 2018, <http://www.fundacaoculturaldecuitiba.com.br/musica/grupos/camerata-antiqua-de-cuitiba>.

<sup>14</sup> Dr. Luis Carlos Justi is a Brazilian oboist and studied with Ingo Goritzki at the State College of Music and Theatre in Hannover. Biography available at: "Luis Carlos Justi," *Loree - Paris*, accessed October 30, 2018, <http://www.loree-paris.com/musiciens/luis-carlos-justi/?lang=en>.

<sup>15</sup> Klein, in discussion with the author, October 2018.

In 1982, Klein moved to São Paulo and started college at the UNESP - São Paulo State University - majoring in Composition and Conducting. While studying at UNESP, he took private oboe lessons with Walter Bianchi, a former student of Marcel Tabuteau.<sup>16</sup> Shortly after his arrival in São Paulo, Klein won the first prize at the Young Soloists Competition of the Symphony Orchestra of São Paulo State (OESP) and performed the Haydn Oboe Concerto with the OESP.<sup>17</sup> Still in São Paulo city, Klein joined the Municipal Youth Symphony Orchestra under the direction of Jamil Maluf. During this time, Klein also took orchestral conducting lessons with Mr. Maluf.<sup>18</sup>

In 1983, Klein won the first prize at the Young Soloists Competition of the Symphony Orchestra of Porto Alegre (OSPA) and performed Richard Strauss's Oboe Concerto (1945) for the first time under the direction of Eleazar de Carvalho, a former Professor of Conducting at Julliard School of Music and at Yale University.<sup>19</sup> Also, in the same year, Klein won first prize at the Piracicaba Young Soloist Competition.<sup>20</sup>

The next year, 1984, Klein participated at the OESP Young Conductor Competition and was invited to conduct Tchaikovsky's Sixth Symphony with the *OESP* during the year's performing season. However, in mid-1984, Klein moved to the USA and he had to decline the

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<sup>16</sup> Walter Bianchi was a Brazilian oboist, former student of Marcel Tabuteau, and John Mack's classmate at the Curtis Institute. Laila Storch. *Marcel Tabuteau: How Do You Expect to Play the Oboe If You Can't Peel a Mushroom?*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008) 394.

<sup>17</sup> The Symphony Orchestra of São Paulo state (OESP) was founded in 1954 and since its foundation, it's been a leading orchestra in South America. History available in Portuguese at: Luiz Marques, "Oesp - 1954 / 2014," *Orquestra Sinfônica de São Paulo*, accessed November 1, 2018, <http://www.oesp.art.br/paginadinamica.aspx?pagina=linhadotempo>.

<sup>18</sup> Klein, in discussion with the author, October 2018.

<sup>19</sup> Eleazar de Carvalho, was a Brazilian orchestra conductor. He was a former student of Sergey Koussevitzky at the Berkshire Music Center in Massachusetts and shared with Leonard Bernstein the function of Koussevitzky's assistant. Eleazar was also Professor of Conducting at Julliard School of Music, at the Yale University, and at the Hofstra College and among his students, there are Claudio Abbado, Zubin Metha, Seiji Osawa, and Gustav Meier. Biography available in Portuguese at: "Eleazar de Carvalho," *Academia Brasileira de Música*, accessed November 1, 2018, <http://www.abmusica.org.br/academico.php?n=releazar-de-carvalho&id=804>.

<sup>20</sup> Klein, in discussion with the author, October 2018.

invitation. Between 1975 and 1984, Klein participated in multiple seasons of Brazilian music festivals such as: Music Festival of Curitiba (1975, 1977, and 1984), the USP International Biennial of Music (1976), Prados Music Festival (1978 and 1979), São João del-Rei Music Festival (1979), Music Festival of Brasilia (1980, 1981, and 1982), Music Festival of Campos do Jordão (1980, 1981, and 1982), and Music Festival of Gramado (1983).<sup>21</sup>

It was during one of those Music Festival of Campos do Jordão events that Klein met the American oboist William Bennett, a member of the San Francisco Symphony.<sup>22</sup> At the time, he asked Bennett for suggestions of oboe teachers in USA who would also teach Baroque oboe. Bennett suggested Professor James Caldwell at the Oberlin Conservatory of Music, Dr. Richard Killmer at the Eastman School of Music, and Professor John de Lancie at the Curtis Institute of Music. Klein wrote to Professor Caldwell, Dr. Killmer, Professor de Lancie, as well as Dr. Allan Vogel in Los Angeles, and Professor/Dr. Sara Bloom at the University of Cincinnati. Caldwell had the most enthusiastic response, and after the application process he offered a generous scholarship to Klein at Oberlin.<sup>23</sup> In July 1984, Klein moved to USA to study at Oberlin Conservatory of Music with James Caldwell.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> William Bennett joined the San Francisco Symphony in 1979. He was appointed the Principal oboist of the SFO in 1987. William passed away after suffering a cerebral hemorrhage while performing Richard Strauss' Oboe Concerto with the San Francisco Orchestra in February 2013. Short biography available at: Joshua Kosman, "Bennett, S.F. Symphony oboist, dies at 56," *SFGate*, February 28, 2013. <https://www.sfgate.com/music/article/Bennett-S-F-Symphony-oboist-dies-at-56-4317151.php> (accessed November 1, 2018).

<sup>23</sup> James Caldwell studied with John de Lancie at the Curtis Institute of Music and was appointed oboe professor at Oberlin Conservatory of Music in 1971. Short biography available at: Michelle Vigneau, "Caldwell, James Boone," *Grove Music Online*, accessed November 3, 2018, <https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.A2282293>.

<sup>24</sup> Klein, in discussion with the author, October 2018.

## Transition to USA

Alex Klein was born and raised in a third-world country governed by a military dictatorship and a democratic revolution started in Brazil in the mid-1980s, challenging the two-decades-long military dictatorship.<sup>25</sup> However, Klein's social and political involvement was minimal,<sup>26</sup> as his parents taught him to be careful about these issues while living under the dictatorial suppression. Once he arrived in the United States, he learned that the social rules were very different than Brazil. Klein was amazed by the American freedom of speech and the breadth of ideas being openly discussed. Even today, he stresses: "from this initial American influence, I started to learn how to participate in a democracy."<sup>27</sup> This awareness made him less afraid of presenting new ideas, even when they were provocative or unconventional. This "freedom" was reflected in his musical artistry and empowered his unusual choice of repertoire. Klein concludes that in Brazil he would not be treated equally well if his artistic thoughts were different than the Brazilian main streams.<sup>28</sup>

At Oberlin, a progressive institution since its foundation, Klein started studying oboe with Caldwell, who also was, besides a mentor, a well-accomplished performer and soloist, an

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<sup>25</sup>In 1964, the Brazilian government suffered a military coup. More details at: "Brazil Coup Affects Whole Continent," *The New York Times*, April 5, 1964. <https://www.nytimes.com/1964/04/05/archives/brazil-coup-affects-whole-continent-overthrow-of-goulart-is.html> (accessed November 8, 2018).

<sup>26</sup> Alan Riding, "Direct Vote Demanded For Brazil," *The New York Times*, February 19, 1986. <https://www.nytimes.com/1984/02/19/world/direct-vote-demanded-for-brazil.html> (accessed November 8, 2018).

<sup>27</sup> Translation by the author. Klein, in discussion with the author, October 2018.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

active recitalist, and an innovative and leading historical scholar.<sup>29 30</sup> There, Klein found a rich environment to learn and hone his own artistry. This combination quickly started producing results. In 1985, he was granted the first *Artistry in Oboe Performance Award* from Oberlin Conservatory.<sup>31</sup> As later stated by Klein:

...he [Caldwell] doesn't want me to play like him. If I disagree with him and want to discuss musical ideas, he is open to it. He accepts my own personality and helps me to develop that personality. I wish more teachers were like that.<sup>32</sup>

In January 1986, Klein was awarded first prize at the *First Lucarelli International Competition for Solo Oboe Players*.<sup>33</sup> As observed by McClure, Humberto Lucarelli envisioned a competition to promote an alternative role to young and talented oboists as soloists and recitalists, other than the role of orchestral playing. For this reason, the repertoire selection for the preliminary rounds and for the finals was open, which enabled contestants to choose a repertoire that would showcase their own strengths.<sup>34</sup> Lucarelli also concluded:

We are producing an unprecedented number of wonderful players who deserve the opportunities made possible through solo playing and chamber music careers, which the orchestral scene cannot offer.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> The Oberlin Collegiate Institute was founded in 1833 by the Presbyterian minister Rev. John J. Shipherd and the missionary Philo P. Stewart. Initially, it was a college and colony based on strong Christian principles. The name Oberlin came after the Alsatian pastor John Frederick Oberlin, who inspired Stewart and Shipherd. Pastor Oberlin was a pioneer in educational programs in France; building schools and roads and introducing blacksmithing and masonry throughout poor communities. Since its foundation, Oberlin thrived on social justice and progressive causes and among earliest graduates there were black people and women. In 1850, the institute became Oberlin College and the Conservatory was appended to the college in 1867. Summary based on "Oberlin History," *Oberlin*, accessed November 5, 2018, <https://www.oberlin.edu/about-oberlin/oberlin-history>.

<sup>30</sup> Patrick Dorsey, "James Caldwell's Legacy Extends Beyond Oboe," *The Oberlin Review*, accessed November 8, 2018, <http://www2.oberlin.edu/stupub/ocreview/2006/02/17/arts/article2.html>

<sup>31</sup> Elizabeth McClure, "A competition Whose Time Has Come...," *The Double Reed* 9, no.1 (1986): 11.

<sup>32</sup> Dan Stolper, "Oboists in the News," *The Double Reed* 11, no.3 (1988): 43-44.

<sup>33</sup> Humbert Lucarelli is known as one of the most important oboe recitalists in America. Biography available at: "Humbert Lucarelli (Oboe)," *Bach Cantatas Website*, accessed November 8, 2018, <http://www.bach-cantatas.com/Bio/Lucarelli-Humbert.htm>

<sup>34</sup> McClure, "A competition," 8-11

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

The finals were held in Carnegie Recital Hall, New York City, and among six finalists there were: Bill Bennett, Kimberly Bryden, Lon Bussel, Alex Klein, Jeff Rathbun, and Cynthia Koledo DeAlmeida. The First Prize consisted of \$1000, plus solo recitals in Chicago, Long Island, Boston, and at the Carnegie Recital Hall in New York City.<sup>36</sup> A few days after winning this prize, Klein was featured as a guest artist in a concert event at Carnegie Hall in New York City, presented by Mr. Humbert Lucarelli, to celebrate the “100th Anniversary of the Modern Oboe”.<sup>37</sup>



**Alex Klein**

Figure 2 - Image extracted from the article announcing the first prize winner at the *Lucarelli International Competition for solo Oboe Players* by The Double Reed magazine.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 10-11.

<sup>37</sup> Richard Shepardjan, “Going Out Guide,” *The New York Times*, January 16, 1986. <https://www.nytimes.com/1986/01/16/arts/going-out-guide.html> (accessed November 8, 2018).

<sup>38</sup> McClure, “A competition,” 11.



The *Lucarelli International Competition for Solo Oboe Players* was Klein's debut in the circle of major international competitions. As Klein remarked, the prize is "an honor and a responsibility" that he takes very seriously. From then on, the twenty-one year old Brazilian oboist started to be introduced as the "winner of an international competition" in subsequent concerts and events.<sup>39</sup>

Alex Klein graduated from Oberlin Conservatory of Music with a Bachelor of Music degree in May 1986;<sup>40</sup> in "finish away basis".<sup>41</sup> While at Oberlin, Klein was granted the *Louis Sudler Prize in the Arts* and the *Artistry in Oboe Performance Award* for his excellence and outstanding musicianship. As stated by Stolper, Professor Caldwell considered Klein "the most challenging student" he ever taught with "a flawless musical memory." Caldwell commented that Klein had "the potential to be one of the greatest wind players in the world" as he "had everything - fine musicianship, maturity, a wonderful ear." Klein also listens to comments, has sense of humor, and always "continues to go forward despite setbacks." Caldwell concluded: "With that kind of attitude and talent, he can only go straight to the top."<sup>42</sup>

In April 1986, Klein was named "Best Interpreter of Czech Music" at the *Prague Spring International Competition* in Czechoslovakia and in August 3, 1986, Klein married Marlise Gnutzmann Botelho.<sup>43</sup> The couple first met in a music festival in Brazil and the relationship became serious when Klein moved to São Paulo in 1982.<sup>44</sup> Ten days after their wedding, in August 13, Klein was awarded the first prize at the *6th Annual Fernand Gillet Performance*

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>40</sup> Klein, in discussion with the author, October 2018.

<sup>41</sup> More information available at: "Graduation," *Oberlin College and Conservatory*, accessed November 14, 2018, <https://www.oberlin.edu/registrar/graduation>.

<sup>42</sup> Stolper, "Oboists," 43-44.

<sup>43</sup> Klein, in discussion with the author, October 2018.

<sup>44</sup> Marlise Botelho, "Marlise Gnutzmann Botelho," *Iama Online*, accessed November 12, 2018, [http://www.iamaonline.com/Bio/Marlise\\_Klein.htm](http://www.iamaonline.com/Bio/Marlise_Klein.htm)

*Competition*. According to Davis, after preliminary auditions, and the semifinals, there were three oboists selected to the finals: Heidi Ann Chisholm from United States, Christophe Dorsaz from Switzerland, and Alex Klein from Brazil. The final round was held on August 13, 1986 at the *Fifteenth Annual Conference of the International Double Reed Society*, in an open concert. The repertoire was Goossens' *Concerto in One Movement, Op. 45*, and the first prize consisted of \$800 plus the performance of the same concerto with orchestra on the final program of the conference, on August 14th, 1986.<sup>45</sup>

After his graduation at Oberlin, Klein entered the Artist Diploma program at the Curtis Institute of Music and studied with Richard Woodhams, the principal oboist of the Philadelphia Orchestra.<sup>46</sup> However, shortly after starting at Curtis, Klein changed his mind and made plans to go back to his *alma mater*. In 1987, he withdrew from Curtis and returned to Oberlin to enroll in the Artist Diploma Program, to continue his study with Mr. Caldwell.<sup>47</sup> In July of 1987, Alex Klein was also awarded first prize in the *Aspen Music Festival Woodwind Competition*.<sup>48</sup>

In September of the next year, 1988, Klein was awarded the first prize in the *44th Concours International d'Execution Musicale*, held in Geneva, Switzerland. In a letter addressed to Daniel Stolper, the twenty-three-year-old Brazilian oboist comments:

Of all the competitions I've entered in my life I can't remember being more prepared than I was to compete in Geneva. I usually work very hard for any performance, but knowing this prize hadn't been awarded in almost 30 years concerned me a lot.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> William Davis, "Report of the 6th Annual Fernand Gillet Performance Competition," *The Double Reed* 9, no.2 (1986): 5.

<sup>46</sup> Richard Woodhams studied at the Curtis Institute of Music under Professor John de Lancie. He is the principal oboe of the Philadelphia Orchestra since 1977 and teaches at the Curtis Institute of Music since 1985. Short biography available at: "Richard Woodhams," *Curtis Institute of Music*, accessed November 3, 2018, <https://www.curtis.edu/academics/faculty/richard-woodhams/>

<sup>47</sup> Klein, in discussion with the author, October 2018.

<sup>48</sup> NA, "Oboists in the News," *The Double Reed* 14, no.2 (1991): 69.

<sup>49</sup> Stolper, "Oboists," 44.

The first prize consisted of 10,000 Swiss francs, an inscribed gold Rolex watch, and representation on a compact disc recording produced by Radio Suisse Internationale and distributed to over 700 radio stations worldwide. In the preliminary round, Klein played Martinu's *Concerto for Oboe and Small Orchestra* and a partita for solo oboe by Telemann. For the second round, he played Vivaldi's *Oboe Sonata in C minor*, a set of variations by Pasculli, the *Three Romances for Oboe and Piano* by Robert Schumann, a *Concerto for Oboe and String Orchestra* by the Swiss contemporary composer Julien-François Zbinden, and Luciano Berio's *Sequenza VII* for solo oboe. Klein advanced to the final with two other oboists. For the final round, Klein performed Richard Strauss *Concerto for Oboe and Small Orchestra in D major, AV 144*. Within less than half hour after the finals performances, Klein was declared first prize winner. The last oboist to receive this honor was Heinz Holliger in 1959; Klein was the first oboist from the American continent to win the first prize at Geneva. The music critic of the Geneva Tribune claimed that Klein's musicality and maturity "won the jury over, charmed moreover by his freedom of interpretation."<sup>50</sup>



Figure 3 – Image extracted from the booklet of the album *1988 International Competition for Musical Performers*.<sup>51</sup>

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 44.

<sup>51</sup> Program notes by André Hunziker at: Klein, Alex, Viktor Vidović, Jonas Bylund, Joaquin da Silva Pereira, and Orchestre de la Suisse Romande, *1988 International Competition for Musical Performers - Geneva: The First Prize Winners*, CD, Berne, Switzerland: Swiss Radio International Transcriptions, 1989, Booklet, 12-13.

In November 1988, Klein was awarded top prize at the second *International Oboe Competition of Tokyo*. The event was sponsored by the Sony Music Foundation and supported by the Agency for Cultural Affairs and the All Japan Band Association. The first prize was not awarded in this competition and two oboists tied for second place: Alex Klein from Brazil and Jacques Tys from France. Peter Cooper from USA was awarded third place. As no one qualified as first place, the committee decided to add and award the fourth place prize to Antje von Moock from Germany. The second prize consisted of 700,000 yen.<sup>52</sup>

Also in 1988, Alex Klein commissioned the Brazilian composer and friend, Marco Aurélio Yano, to compose an oboe concerto.<sup>53</sup> He requested that the concerto should be at least thirty minutes long, scored for large orchestra in a “slightly concertante” style, and that it would contain musical and cultural traits from Brazil. It should also incorporate improvisatory and 20th century techniques but at the same time explore the lyrical capability of the oboe. Klein also urged Yano to push the known limits of oboe technique “to provide players with a much-needed evolution of the instrument’s capabilities.”<sup>54</sup>

Yano finished the manuscripts three years after the commission and started to work on its orchestration. Tragically, he was diagnosed with brain tumors and passed away in 1991, leaving the orchestration unfinished. The manuscript, together with the incomplete orchestration, was passed on to his composition teacher and mentor Edmundo Villani Cortes, who finished orchestrating it according to Yano’s specifications. Finally, Klein refined the score and orchestration in preparation for recording and performances. He first performed just the third

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<sup>52</sup> “Two Important International Competitions,” *The Double Reed* 13, no.2 (1990): 32-33

<sup>53</sup> Alex Klein, “Marco Aurélio Yano,” *Classical Connect*, accessed November 8, 2018, <https://www.classicalconnect.com/composer/Marco%20Aur%C3%A9lio%20Yano>.

<sup>54</sup> Alex Klein, Paul Freeman, and Czech National Symphony Orchestra, *Twentieth-Century Oboe Concertos*, CD, Chicago: Cedille Records, 2005, Booklet, 9.

movement of the concerto at the Teatro Colón in 2000, during the IDRS conference in Buenos Aires, Argentina.<sup>55</sup> The premiere and first recording of the concerto took place in June 2003 in Prague with the Czech National Symphony Orchestra, and Paul Freeman conducting.<sup>56</sup>

Alex Klein finished his Artist Diploma in 1989 and Mr. Caldwell invited him to become an oboe teacher, as his assistant, at Oberlin Conservatory of Music. Klein accepted and held this position for the next two years.<sup>57</sup>

In 1990, the album *O Baroque: Music for Three Oboes and Strings* was released by MCA Records. In this recording, Klein performs as soloist side-by-side with Humberto Lucarelli and the New York Philharmonic's principal oboist Joseph Robinson;<sup>58</sup> both legendary oboists from the USA. In a review in *The Double Reed* magazine, Jeanne Belfy exclaims that "the sheer joy of an oboe celebration triumphs," and points out that the "three world-class oboists switch parts without notice." At this point, Klein was only twenty-five.<sup>59</sup>

## **Professional Career**

Alex Klein moved to Seattle and started teaching oboe and chamber music at the University of Washington in 1991.<sup>60</sup> As Klein stated to *The Seattle Times*, the position of Professor of Oboe at UW was his first major appointment. While he served as Mr. Caldwell's assistant at Oberlin, at UW, he was the head. Klein was pleased with this position:

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<sup>55</sup> Daniel Stolper, "Buenos Aires 2000," *The Double Reed* 23, no. 4 (2000): 16-17.

<sup>56</sup> Klein et al., *Twentieth-Century Oboe Concertos*, 2-9.

<sup>57</sup> Klein, in discussion with the author, October 2018.

<sup>58</sup> Joseph Robinson's biography available at: Geoffrey Burgess, "Robinson, Joseph," *Grove Music Online*, accessed November 8, 2018, <https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.45084>

<sup>59</sup> Jeanne Belfy, "Oboe Record Reviews," *The Double Reed* 14, no.3 (1991): 31.

<sup>60</sup> NA, "Oboists in the News," *The Double Reed* 14, no.2 (1991): 69.

This is a good place to live, and it's a very stable school here. I have the freedom to tour around, students to teach, and the repertoire I love to play. Now I'm complete: I have everything I need.<sup>61</sup>

Klein's faculty recital debut at the University of Washington was in October 8, 1991. The program included Bozza's *Sonata for Oboe and Piano*, *Sonatine for Oboe and Piano* by Thomas Attwood Walmisley, Pasculli's *Gran Concerto*, and the Reicha's *Woodwind Quintet in E minor, Op. 100, Nr.4*. He performed as member of the Soni Ventorum Wind Quintet and was assisted by Lisa Bergman, piano.<sup>62</sup> Klein officially joined the Soni Ventorum Quintet in 1992, replacing retiring Professor Laila Storch as both Professor of Oboe at UW and as oboist in the Soni Ventorum quintet. While in Seattle, Klein maintained a busy schedule of concerts, master classes, and recordings.<sup>63</sup> During this time, together with his wife Marlise Klein, he founded and directed the Chamber Music Society of Seattle.<sup>64</sup>

In 1992, Pawel Sydor composed *Virtuti Militari* for Alex Klein, a concerto for oboe and orchestra. The work celebrates the bicentennial anniversary of the highest Polish military order, the *Virtuti Militari*. The last of the Polish monarchs, King Stanislaus Augustus Poniatowsky, established the order in 1792 to recognize the highest gallantry in battle. Pawel Sydor and Alex Klein first met at the Oberlin Conservatory, while Sydor was a student of composition and Klein was an oboe teacher. Impressed by Klein's oboe playing, Pawel asked if he could write something for him. Klein accepted the offer and suggested cadenzas for the Mozart's oboe concerto. After the cadenzas were composed, Klein asked: "Why don't you write an oboe

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<sup>61</sup> Melinda Bargreen, "Alex Klein Masters The Oboe, And Contentment, In Seattle," *The Seattle Times*, October 3, 1991. <http://community.seattletimes.nwsourc.com/archive/?date=19911003&slug=1308819> (accessed November 9, 2018).

<sup>62</sup> "Faculty Artist Recital: Alex Klein," *University Libraries - University of Washington*, program notes, accessed November 12, 2018, <http://hdl.handle.net/1773/30520>.

<sup>63</sup> "New Officers of the IDRS," *The Double Reed* 20, no.2 (1998): 8.

<sup>64</sup> "The Artists: Alex Klein," *The Soni Ventorum Wind Quintet*, accessed in November 12, 2018, <https://soniventorum.com/3.html>.

concerto?” Sydor followed his suggestion and composed the concerto *Virtuti Militari*. Sydor received an award for this composition at the 1994 Juilliard School Composers’ Competition. As a result, the piece was premiered by Humberto Lucarelli and the Juilliard Symphony in Alice Tully Hall, at the Lincoln Center. Klein recorded *Virtuti Militari* with the Czech National Symphony Orchestra, with Paul Freeman as conductor, in June 2003.<sup>65</sup> However, until the present day, he never performed this piece in a live concert.<sup>66</sup>

On January 30, 1995, Alex Klein’s first child, Stephan Klein, was born in Seattle.<sup>67</sup> In March of the same year, Klein was invited by the Chicago Symphony conductor Daniel Barenboim to participate of the final round of the audition for the CSO principal oboe chair.<sup>68</sup> The finals were held on March 27. Klein received this invitation three days prior to the audition, and he was scheduled to perform two solo concertos with the Northwest Chamber Orchestra on that weekend. Klein performed the concertos and flew on Sunday night, the “red-eye flight,” from Seattle to Chicago. He auditioned the next day. As he stated to Bognár:

It was certainly a very demanding day. I played five times for the final auditions. I came, played orchestral excerpts, Mozart concerto, Strauss concerto, sight reading, and chamber music. That chamber music with Barenboim playing at the piano.<sup>69</sup>

On the same day of the finals, Klein was invited to play a rehearsal and a special concert at night. During this rehearsal, Barenboim announced to the orchestra that Klein would be the CSO's new principal oboe. Klein filled a chair occupied for four decades by Ray Still.<sup>70</sup> Klein

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<sup>65</sup> Klein *et al.*, *Twentieth-Century Oboe Concertos*, 5.

<sup>66</sup> Klein, in discussion with the author, October 2018.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>68</sup> Daniel Barenboim’s biography available at: Alan Blyth, “Barenboim, Daniel,” *Grove Music Online*, accessed November 13, 2018, <https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.02040>

<sup>69</sup> Transcribed by the author, Zsolt Bognár. “Alex Klein,” *Living the Classical Life*, episode 51, January 11, 2018. 6’14” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1V9mWyHsNRk>.

<sup>70</sup> John von Rhein, “The Player,” *Chicago Tribune*, September 10, 1995. <https://www.chicagotribune.com/news/ct-xpm-1995-09-10-9509100241-story.html> (accessed November 13, 2018).

was succeeded at University of Washington by Rebecca Henderson, and after moving to Chicago, he joined the faculty of Northwestern University at Evanston.<sup>71</sup> Also in 1995, Daniel Asia composed *The Alex Set* for Alex Klein. The piece was premiered by Klein in June of the same year at National Music Critics' Conference.<sup>72</sup>



Figure 4 - Sir Georg Solti and Alex Klein during rehearsals for the Grammy awarded recording of Wagner's *Die Meistersinger* with the CSO, September of 1995. Photo from Klein's personal archive.

In addition, the album *Vivaldi Oboe Concerti* by Musical Heritage Society was released in 1995.<sup>73</sup> The album consists of a selection of eight concertos by Antonio Vivaldi (1675-1741), performed by Alex Klein and the New Brandenburg Collegium, led by conductor and harpsichordist Anthony Newman. The recording was made possible through a grant from the University of Washington and artist royalties are donated to an oboe scholarship fund at the

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<sup>71</sup> "Oboists in the News," *The Double Reed* 19, no.2 (1996): 39.

<sup>72</sup> Daniel Asia, "The Alex Set (1995)," *Daniel Asia*, accessed November 13, 2018, <https://danielasia.net/discography/the-alex-set-1995-2/>

<sup>73</sup> Daniel Stolper, "Oboists in the News," *The Double Reed* 20, no.1 (1997): 28.



University of Washington School of Music.<sup>74</sup> In 2010, the same album was reissued by Cedille recordings.<sup>75</sup> Reviewing the album for the *Fanfare Magazine*, George Chien stated: “Flawlessly articulated and ornamented, they are breathtaking in their daredevil virtuosity.”<sup>76</sup>

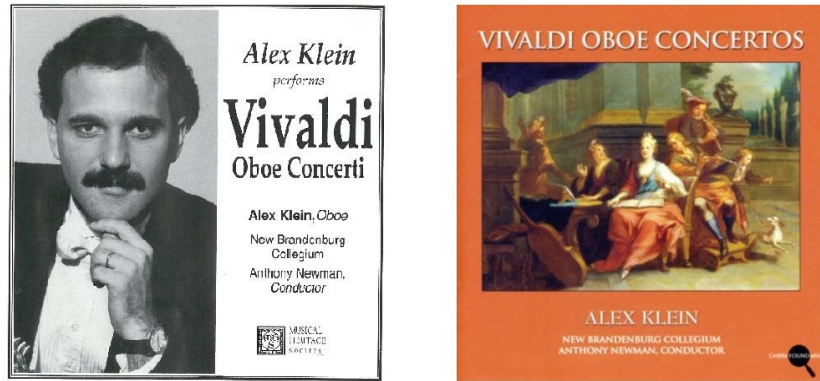


Figure 5 - Album *Vivaldi Oboe Concerti*, 1995, and the reissue from 2010.

Alex Klein debut as a soloist with the Chicago Symphony was in September 21, 1996, in a concert entitled “Music by Richard Strauss.”<sup>77</sup> In addition to Klein’s performance of the Strauss Oboe Concerto, orchestra concertmaster Rubén D’Artagnan González also performed the Concerto for Violin and Orchestra in D minor, Op. 8, principal horn Dale Clevenger performed the Horn Concerto No.1, Op.11, and the orchestra performed “Till Eulenspiegel's Merry Pranks.” The orchestra was conducted by Daniel Barenboim and the concert was supported by the Household International Chicago Symphony Orchestra Soloist fund, the Illinois Arts Council, and the National Endowment for Arts.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Alex Klein, Anthony Newman, and the New Brandenburg Collegium, *Vivaldi Oboe Concerti*, CD, Ocean, NJ: Musical Heritage Society, 1995, booklet: 2-4.

<sup>75</sup> “Vivaldi Oboe Concertos,” *Cedille Records*, accessed November 14, 2018, <http://www.cedillerecords.org/albums/vivaldi-oboe-concertos>

<sup>76</sup> George Chien, “Vivaldi 8 Oboe Concertos,” *Fanfare: The Magazine for Serious Record Collectors*, 34, no. 4 (2011): 473.

<sup>77</sup> Stolper, “Oboists in the News,” *The Double Reed* 20, no.1 (1997): 27.

<sup>78</sup> “Music by Richard Strauss,” *Chicago Symphony Orchestra*, Daniel Barenboim, Chicago: Orchestra Hall, September 21, 1996, program notes: 55.

Klein's debut performance of the concerto was warmly received in the press, as stated by Lawrence Johnson in the Chicago Tribune:

Written in his 81st year, Strauss's Oboe Concerto seamlessly combines high-spirited youth with the wisdom of old age in an unending stream of gracious melody. Both elements were expertly conveyed in Alex Klein's quite remarkable, beautifully turned performance.<sup>79</sup>

Also, by Wynne Delacoma at the Chicago Sun Times:

... anybody who has listened to Klein in orchestral concerts over the last year already knows he is a remarkable talent. His performance Tuesday of Strauss' only concerto for oboe, which prompted a storm of cheers and applause, confirmed that fact.<sup>80</sup>

In 1997, the album "IDRS 25th Anniversary" was released by Cristal records.<sup>81</sup> Alex Klein and bassoonist George Sakakeeny performed the *Duo pour Hautbois et Basson* by Heitor Villa-Lobos (1887-1959) at the 1996 International Double Reed Society 25th Anniversary Conference at Tallahassee, Florida. The recording of this live performance was featured on this commemorative album.

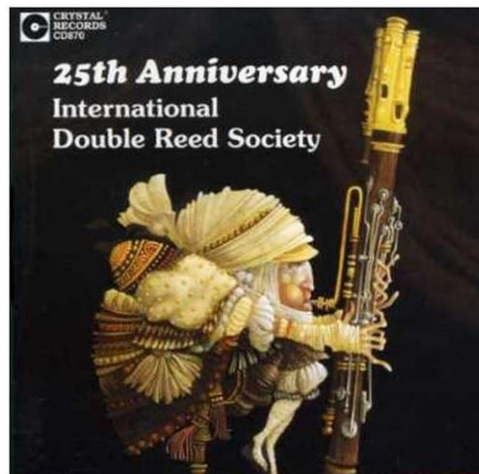


Figure 6 - Commemorative album IDRS 25th Anniversary.

<sup>79</sup> Quoted in Stolper, "Oboists," 27.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 27.

<sup>81</sup> Yoshi Ishikawa, "Message from the President," *The Double Reed* 20, no.1 (1997): 8.

On January 12, 1998, Alex Klein's second child, Ani Klein, was born in Chicago.<sup>82</sup> In October, Klein recorded Richard Strauss Concerto for Oboe with the Chicago Symphony under Daniel Barenboim's direction.<sup>83</sup> Also in 1998, Klein visited a family doctor claiming that something odd with his health was happening as he felt a searing pain in the chest area. At the time, he thought it could be "some kind of heart issue." However, none was found. In an article written in 2016, Klein states that only a few years after this incident he would understand how his pectoral muscle was being stressed, causing pain on the sternum bone, as an early effect of the Focal Dystonia.<sup>84</sup>

The next year, 1999, Klein was appointed Professor of Oboe at the Roosevelt University and had three solo albums released:<sup>85</sup> *Oboe Concertos of the Classical Era* by Cedille Records, as well as *Fantasies and Partitas* and *The Greatest Works Schubert (N)ever Wrote for the Oboe*, both by Boston Records.

*Oboe Concertos of the Classical Era* was recorded with the Czech National Symphony Orchestra, under the direction of Paul Freeman. The album contains the *Oboe Concerto no.1 in F Major, Op. 37*, and the *Oboe Concerto no.2 in F Major, Op. 52*, by Franz Krommer (1759-1831) and the *Introduction, Theme, and Variations in F minor, Op. 102*, by Johann Nepomuk Hummel (1778-1837).<sup>86</sup> As stated by Belfy in a review to *The Double Reed*:

Alex Klein's solo playing is appropriately delicate, flexible and virtuosic. And what else dare I say about Alex Klein, hired by his countryman just a few years ago to fill the shoes of Ray Still? With this reputation built as a soloist, he should find himself in his element performing these concertos with Founding Music

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<sup>82</sup> Klein, in discussion with the author, October 2018.

<sup>83</sup> Alex Klein, Dale Clevenger, Larry Combs, Daniel Barenboim, and the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, *Richard Strauss Wind Concertos*, CD, Hamburg: Teldec Classics International, 2001, booklet: 3.

<sup>84</sup> Alex Klein, "Focal Dystonia and Me," *The Double Reed* 39, no.3 (2016): 51.

<sup>85</sup> "Roosevelt University Faculty," *Roosevelt University*, accessed November 25, 2018, <https://www.roosevelt.edu/~media/Files/pdfs/library/FacultyDirectory.pdf?la=en>

<sup>86</sup> Alex Klein, Paul Freeman, and the Czech National Symphony Orchestra, *Oboe Concertos of the Classical Era*, CD, Chicago: Cedille Records, 1999, booklet.

Director of the Chicago Sinfonietta Paul Freeman [...] and the orchestra, tastefully and often boldly led, supplies a good measure of sheer musical joy of its own.<sup>87</sup>



Figure 7 - Album cover of *Oboe Concertos of the Classical Era*.

*Fantasies and Partitas* is an album of unaccompanied pieces by Bach and Telemann. Among over forty tracks, there are movements from J. S. Bach's *Sonatas no. 1, 2 and 3 for solo violin* (BWV 1001, BWV 1004, and BWV 1005,) the *Partita for Solo Violin no. 3* (BWV 1006,) and the *Partita for Solo Flute* (BWV 1013.) The album also includes Georg Philipp Telemann's *Fantasies no. 1 to 12 for Solo Flute* (TWV 40:2 to TWV 40:11.)<sup>88</sup>

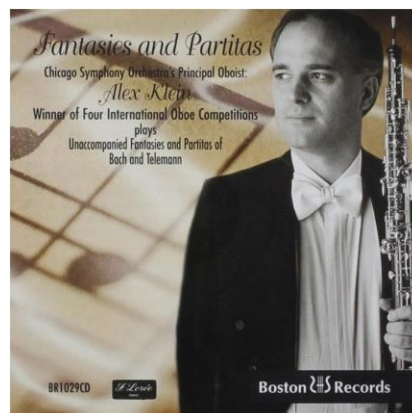


Figure 8 - Album cover of *Fantasies and Partitas*

<sup>87</sup> Jeanne Belfy, "Oboe Recording Reviews," *The Double Reed* 22, no. 3 (1999): 43-44.

<sup>88</sup> Alex Klein, *Fantasies and Partitas*, CD, Duxbury, MA: Boston Records, 1999, booklet.

*The Greatest Works Schubert (N)ever Wrote for the Oboe* presents works by Franz Schubert (1797-1828) adapted to the oboe. In this album, Klein was accompanied by pianist Craig Sheppard, and by soprano Carmen Pelton. The pieces recorded are the *Sonata in A minor, D.821, Arpeggione*; *De Hirt auf dem Felsen, D.965*; the *Sonatina in D major, Opus 137, no.1* (D.384) and the *Sonatina in A minor, Opus 137, no. 2* (D.385.) In order to play the *Arpeggione* sonata, Klein commissioned an oboe with a wider range than the standard. As described by him:

In 1994 I met with Alain de Gourdon, maker of the fine F. Lorée oboes and asked him to build an instrument that would play lower and substantially higher than what was currently available. De Gourdon accepted the challenge. A year later, the oboe was ready. The *Arpeggione* Sonata's first ever performance on an oboe occurred in July, 1996 at the Seattle Chamber music Festival.<sup>89</sup>

The new and extended oboe was well-received, as Bargreen wrote in a review for the *Seattle Times*:

The 'Arpeggione' Sonata, 'The Shepherd on the Rock' and the Sonatinas in D Major and A Minor were all originally written for different instruments, but Klein has never been shy about staging the occasional raid on other repertoire - even when it means commissioning a special, deeper oboe to play the 'Arpeggione.' And thank goodness, too: The music-making here is so spectacularly beautiful that even Schubert might have changed his mind about the original instrumentation.<sup>90</sup>

Klein is also praised by his orchestral playing at the Chicago Symphony, as stated by Charles-David Lehrer in a review for the same album at *The Double Reed*:

This is a wonderful recording by the principal oboe of the Chicago Symphony. I must say that Mr. Klein brings a new dimension to the woodwind section of that orchestra, his sound far more pliant and smooth than Ray Still's of many years. Yet you can still sense the orchestral musician in his tone, fully capable of piercing through the fabled brass section.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Alex Klein, Carmen Pelton, and Craig Sheppard, *The Greatest Works Schubert (N)Ever Wrote for the Oboe*, CD, Duxbury, MA: Boston Records, 1999, booklet: 5-12.

<sup>90</sup> Melinda Bargreen, "Cuddle up With the Classics," *The Seattle Times*, July 20, 2000. <http://community.seattletimes.nwsourc.com/archive/?date=20000720&slug=4032629> (accessed November 14, 2018).

<sup>91</sup> Charles-David Lehrer, "The Double Reed Archaeologist: A Guide to its Contents," *The Double Reed* 24, no. 4 (2001): 56-57.

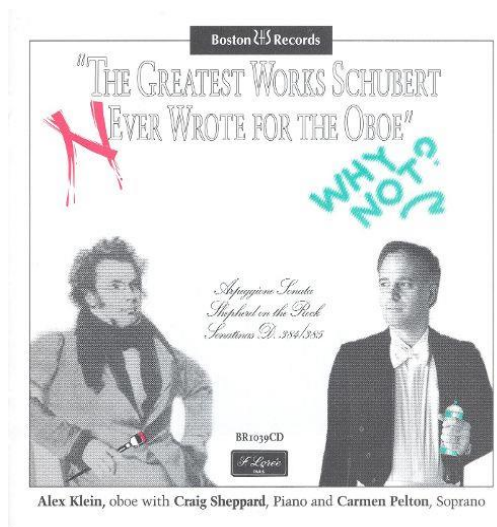


Figure 9 - Album cover of *The Greatest Works Schubert (N)ever Wrote for the Oboe*

The album *Richard Strauss - Wind Concertos* from the Chicago Symphony Orchestra was released by Teldec in 2001. It included the CSO's recordings made in October 1998, and the repertoire was: the *Horn Concerto no. 1 in E flat major, op. 11*, performed by Dale Clevenger, the *Duett-Concertino for clarinet and bassoon, string and harp in F major, AV 147*, performed by clarinetist Larry Combs and bassoonist David McGill, the *Concerto for Oboe and Small Orchestra in D major, AV 144*, performed by Alex Klein, the *Andante for Horn and Piano in C major, AV 86A*, performed by hornist Dale Clevenger and Daniel Barenboim at the piano, and the *Stimmungsbilder op. 9 for Piano*, performed by Barenboim.<sup>92</sup>

The next year, 2002, Alex Klein's recording of Strauss' Oboe Concerto was declared a winner at the 44th Grammy Awards (2001) category *Best Instrumental Soloist Performance (with Orchestra)*.<sup>93</sup>

<sup>92</sup> Alex Klein, Dale Clevenger, Larry Combs, the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, and Conductor Daniel Barenboim. *Richard Strauss - Wind Concertos*. CD. Hamburg, Germany: Teldec, 2001, booklet: 2-3.

<sup>93</sup> "Alex Klein," *Grammy*, accessed November 14, 2018, <https://www.grammy.com/grammys/artists/alex-klein>.

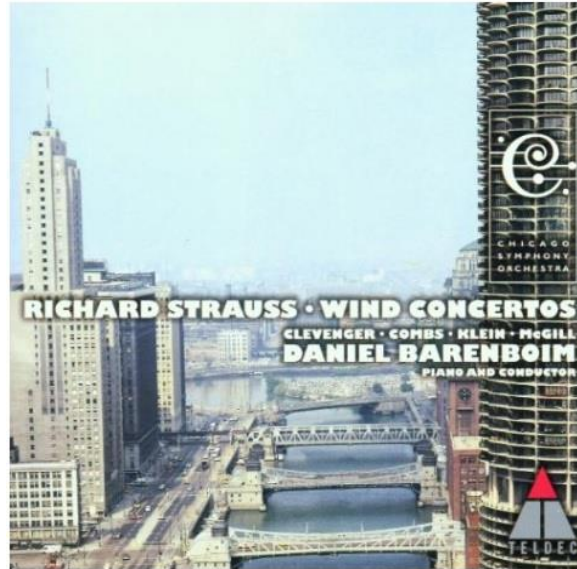


Figure 10 - Album awarded at the 44th Grammy awards category *Best Instrumental Soloist Performance (with Orchestra)*.

## **Focal Dystonia**

In the year 2000, while participating in a concert for the Chicago Symphony's Family Series, Klein was asked to "walk like a duck" and play the oboe lines of Prokofiev's *Peter and the Wolf* at the same time. As a result, he pulled a muscle in the tailbone area. Initially treated with steroids, the issue created a cascade effect in his muscles, ranging from his lower back to his left hand, as his fingers curled into the palm of his hand. A few weeks after this episode, Klein started to have difficulties performing works well-known to him. Additionally, his rate of learning music started to become much slower than usual. This situation escalated to a point in which he needed to practice a full hour of scales before rehearsals or concerts. At this point, Klein realized that something was terribly wrong. By early 2001, Klein had consulted four neurologists in the Chicago area and all four confirmed that he had acquired Focal Dystonia.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> Dystonia is a neurological movement-disorder, where messages between the brain and muscles are wrongly exchanged. For more information, see Appendix 1, or Alex Klein, "Focal Dystonia and Me," *The Double Reed* 39, no.3 (2016).

In an extensive article about his history with the Dystonia to *The Double Reed*, Klein described:<sup>95</sup>

Focal Dystonia is ‘silent’, with no apparent sign of the condition setting in. There is no pain, no ‘click’, no dizziness or rash or any identifiable mark that a change has occurred in the way our brain works in the affected area. After one acquires Focal Dystonia our body will make adjustments to the area naturally, automatically. It is beautiful, a bit scary, and curious to see this process at work. Eventually some localized symptoms begin to appear as consequences of the original Focal Dystonia event in the brain, such as curled fingers, spasms and certain difficulties with tasks usually done with greater precision, or when the natural adjustments no longer provide sufficient relief. The question remains to me if these are consequences ‘of Focal Dystonia’ or ‘of the body’s efforts in making up for the presence of Focal Dystonia’. The latter is a mending attitude, and the former is a direct damage caused by the affected neuron(s).<sup>96</sup>

Immediately after the diagnosis, Klein alerted the CSO’s management and he gradually entered into a period of experimentation, searching aimlessly and unsuccessfully for a solution, trying finger weights, short periods of time away from the instrument, different kinds of warm-ups, visits to chiropractors, massage therapy, acupuncture, and postural work. Some dentists even proposed that it could be mercury poisoning after old fillings. He also tried medicine for Parkinson’s disease, Novocain (a dental anesthetic), and Botox injections, physical therapy, stretching, and magnetic resonance imaging for possible brain tumors. Klein had no success with these therapeutic treatments against the disorder.

However, while researching and experimenting, he learned that a few sensory tricks could, in some way, help to cope with his limitations. For example, the disorder did not affect his oboe d’amore or English horn playing, just the oboe. Klein also glued a large coin over the G-key of his oboe, extending it towards his ring finger. This extension allowed him to play with a different finger position and his brain would interpret it as a “new” function.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> See Appendix 1.

<sup>96</sup> Klein, “Focal Dystonia,” 49.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, 51-55.



In his publication on the disorder, Klein explains that he believes he possibly acquired Focal Dystonia during his initial years at Chicago Symphony, 1995 to 1997, and he spent most of his nine years tenure coping with the disorder. As he recalled, the first visit to a physician was in 1998 due a searing pain in the chest, but nothing was found at the time. Years later, he would come to the conclusion that the pectoral muscle was being stressed on the left side as an early consequence of his body compensating and adapting to the illness. In his case, Focal Dystonia affected the direct communication between his brain and the middle and ring fingers in his left hand, resulting in involuntary spasm-like movements without advance notice in these fingers. Soon, Klein noticed that applying greater tension to the muscles of the hand while playing the oboe tended to minimize these occurrences. This way he could play normally. Over time, this tension accumulated and overstressed the surrounding muscles, particularly the extensor, flexor, biceps, triceps, and deltoids muscles.<sup>98</sup> As he stated: “For a year or two I had this ball of muscle in my triceps that could not unravel no matter how we massaged it. That was a result of forcing my muscles to do this intense and unnatural work.”<sup>99</sup>

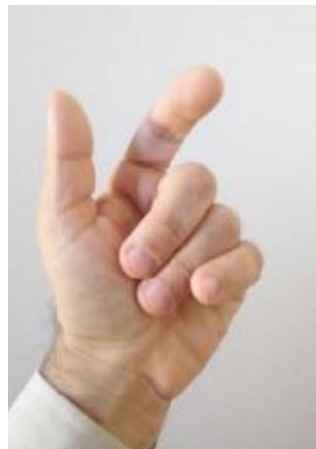


Figure 11 - Alex Klein's left hand in relaxed position with two fingers clenched into the palm. Picture published in Klein's article, "Focal Dystonia and Me."

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<sup>98</sup> Ibid., 51-54.

<sup>99</sup> Michele Fiala, "An Interview with Alex Klein," *The Double Reed* 27, no.3 (2004): 97.

The tension from this coping strategy caused multiple and severe tendonitis. In November 2001, the worst came: “I was unable to play, at all.”<sup>100</sup> While at the rehearsals with CSO, he just sat and took notes, watching others playing, and feeling useless. At this point, he requested a longer medical leave and spent two months without playing. He hoped to restart fresh, but it did not work. In addition, the years prior to the diagnosis and around the diagnosis itself were fulfilled with emotional turmoil, as well as professional turbulence. The fight against the disorder took its toll on his family, and a few days into this medical leave Klein was served with divorce papers, claiming that the consequences of the disorder were an impediment to his marriage.<sup>101</sup>

Following the diagnosis and after much experimentation, Klein noticed that if he limited his playing to one hour of playing per day on average, the muscles and tendons were able to relax, and the tendonitis could be controlled. However, as the acting principal oboe of a major orchestra, one hour of playing per day was not an option. Under those circumstances, during his last season with the CSO, he confronted strong crisis of tendonitis on a monthly basis. As consequence of these limitations, he was not able to maintain his position at the orchestra.<sup>102</sup> On July 3, 2004, Alex Klein played the last concert of his nine-year tenure with the Chicago Symphony.<sup>103</sup> Klein stated in a later interview: “I realized that I must leave because I praise the Chicago Symphony too much - it was the zenith of my musical career - and I had far too much respect for the institution, for my colleagues, and for Barenboim, to remain in the orchestra and be an unreliable player.”<sup>104</sup> When asked if he felt as if his career was over, Klein explained:

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<sup>100</sup> Klein, “Focal Dystonia,” 55.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, 55-57.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, 55-56.

<sup>103</sup> Fiala, “An Interview,” 95.

<sup>104</sup> Transcribed by the author, Zsolt Bognár. “Alex Klein,” 23’30”.

Of course! I felt like my life was over! You see, Alice Branfonbrenner was the doctor at the Northwestern Memorial Hospital in Chicago, and as a world expert in Focal Dystonia, I was happy when she told me I had Focal Dystonia. Because I never heard of it. I think whatever it is, it can't be as bad as tendinitis. I was thinking: the worst thing you going to tell me is that I have some kind of tendinitis, and she didn't. She said focal something. I can deal with it! Ok, I said, at least I don't have to stop playing. Because with tendinitis I would have to stop playing for a month or two and allow the arm to rest. And then, she wasn't laughing, and she predicted that within about three years I would quit the orchestra out of frustration. And I had to go into denial. I had to go into: thank you doctor but I'm going to try something else. Because I cannot simply accept something like that. That is a sentence. Music for us artists is part of our identity. For me, to stop playing is akin to suicide. Because suddenly I don't exist anymore. So, when I stopped playing in the orchestra, I was down to my last possible attempt to stay.<sup>105</sup>

After leaving the Chicago Symphony Orchestra in 2004, Alex Klein was denied disability compensation, as the CSO's insurance company did not acknowledge Focal Dystonia as a disability. Additionally, he faced unexpected legal issues with his divorce. As he described:

My doctors were barred from testifying on my behalf, and none of my medical information was introduced into Court hearings. I was levied support payments calculated on the basis of my *pre-disability income*, that is, it was as if I never acquired Focal Dystonia at all. I was found to be financially responsible for acquiring a disability, and granted no relief for continuous treatments and medical whatsoever, even if I no longer had income to provide for my own support, let alone for others'. This conclusion is irresponsible and discriminatory, and reached absurd consequences for my children, ironically the ones who were supposed to be protected by a Family Court.<sup>106</sup>

Besides fighting the loss of his family and his job, Klein also had to fight the depression that these losses generated. Even suicide was a considered option: "In my worse hours, yes, I considered a drastic move. Once, saved by a colleague in the orchestra who noticed I was a little bit weird."<sup>107</sup> Dystonia and depression are commonly associated conditions.<sup>108</sup> As such,

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<sup>105</sup> Transcribed by the author, Zsolt Bognár. "Alex Klein," 21'16".

<sup>106</sup> Klein, "Focal Dystonia," 58.

<sup>107</sup> Transcribed by the author, Zsolt Bognár. "Alex Klein," 25'15"

<sup>108</sup> "Dystonia & Depression," *Dystonia Medical Research Foundation*, accessed November 17, 2018. <https://www.dystonia-foundation.org/living-with-dystonia/emotional-mental-health/depression>

institutions and foundations specialized in Dystonia normally approach depression as a serious consequence to the ones living with Dystonia.<sup>109</sup> In an interview, Klein explained to Bognár:

Dystonia is not only about the two fingers, or the parts of our body that are focally affected, it's about depression. Depression takes the comes from the destruction of our identity: "Suddenly, I am not Alex and I play the oboe, my name is Bob and I plant potatoes in Idaho." It is like you wake up and you don't know which way is north. It is your entire life seems to be: a dream? A lie? A confusion?<sup>110</sup>

Unemployed, homeless, and depressed, Klein moved back to Brazil in 2004.<sup>111</sup> As he stated, he literally returned to live on a couch in his parent's living room.<sup>112</sup> The first months of adjustment in Brazil were not easy and Klein later classified this return as his "exile years."<sup>113</sup> However, despite the Focal Dystonia diagnosis, Klein continued recording solo repertoire.

In 2004, the album *Wind Concertos by Cimarosa, Molique, and Moscheles* was released by Cedille Records. The album was recorded in June 2003 (before his departure from the CSO), and together with flutist Mathieu Dufour, conductor Paul Freeman, and the Czech National Symphony Orchestra, Klein plays in three out of four concertos. The album consists of a selection of solo and duo concertos from the classical and early romantic era: the *Concerto for Two Flutes in G Major* by Domenico Cimarosa (1802-1869), played on oboe and flute; the *Concerto in D Minor for Flute and Orchestra* and the *Concertino in G Minor for Oboe and Orchestra* by Wilhelm Bernhard Molique (1802-1869); and the *Concertante for Flute and Oboe*

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<sup>109</sup> "Are you Severely Depressed?," *Dystonia Medical Research Foundation*, accessed November 17, 2018. <https://www.dystonia-foundation.org/crisis>

<sup>110</sup> Transcribed by the author, Zsolt Bognár. "Alex Klein," 24'8"

<sup>111</sup> Tom Hundley, "Despite Disorder, Musician Finds Way to Play," *The New York Times*, June 12, 2010, [https://www.nytimes.com/2010/06/13/arts/music/13cncklein.html?\\_r=0](https://www.nytimes.com/2010/06/13/arts/music/13cncklein.html?_r=0) (accessed November 18, 2018).

<sup>112</sup> Klein, "Focal Dystonia," 56.

<sup>113</sup> Elly Fishman, "The Improbable Encore," *Chicago Magazine*, January 17, 2017, <https://www.chicagomag.com/Chicago-Magazine/February-2017/Oboe-Alex-Klein/> (accessed November 20, 2018).

in *F Major* by Ignaz Moscheles (1794-1870).<sup>114</sup> In a review for *The Double Reed*, Belfy observes:

If you've been living on the moon, you may not have heard about Alex Klein's early retirement from the principal oboe position with the Chicago Symphony, due to Musician's Focal Dystonia. The condition, which has interfered with the reliability of motion in two of his fingers, has not ended his work as a performing artist, but has allowed him to refocus his energy on chamber music, limited solo appearances, conducting, and teaching. The bulk of his oboistic prowess remains, as witnessed by this June 2003 recording of Classical to early Romantic solo and double concertos. Paired with flutist Mathieu Dufour, also principal in the CSO, Klein matches the flutist's technical precision and full-throated timbres note for note.<sup>115</sup>



Figure 12 - Album cover of *Wind Concertos* by Cimarosa, Molique, and Moscheles.

Also in 2004, Alex Klein founded a double reed festival in Panama City. At the event's inauguration, he met bassoonist Catalina Guevara from Costa Rica.<sup>116</sup> Soon, they started a relationship and, in December 30, 2006, Alex Klein and Catalina Guevara were married.<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> Alex Klein, Mathieu Dufour, Paul Freeman, and the Czech National Symphony Orchestra, *Wind Concertos* by Cimarosa, Molique, and Moscheles, CD, Chicago: Cedille Records, 2004, booklet.

<sup>115</sup> Jeanne Belfy, "Reviews," *The Double Reed* 28, no.3 (2005): 146.

<sup>116</sup> Elly Fishman, "The Improbable Encore."

<sup>117</sup> Alex Klein, text messages to author, November 2018.

In 2005, the album *Twentieth Century Oboe Concertos* was released by Cedille Records. This double-disc album was recorded in June 2003 with the Czech National Symphony Orchestra, under the direction of Paul Freeman. The album features the *Concerto for Oboe and Small Orchestra, H.353* (1955), by Bohuslav Martinů (1890-1959), the *Concerto for oboe and orchestra Virtuti Militari* (1992) by Pawel Sydor (b.1970), and the *Concerto for Oboe and Orchestra* (1992) by Marco Aurélio Yano. Yano's concerto as well as *Virtuti Militari* were both composed for Alex Klein.<sup>118</sup> In review for *The Double Reed*, Belfy writes:

The two new oboe concertos are mammoth works, 28 and 37 minutes long, with large, dramatic orchestrations and epic ambitions. Alex Klein set the minimum 30-minute running length for the commission of Japanese-Brazilian composer Marco Aurélio Yano and also specified that the piece have extreme technical demands “so as to provide players with a much needed evolution of the instrument’s technique.” (Klein) [...] The CD includes Bohuslav Martinů’s modest oboe concerto of 1955, so appropriately accompanied by this Czech orchestra, a work that should be recorded often. [...] Alex Klein’s amazing agility and astonishingly sweet tone also distinguish this recorded performance from several others.<sup>119</sup>

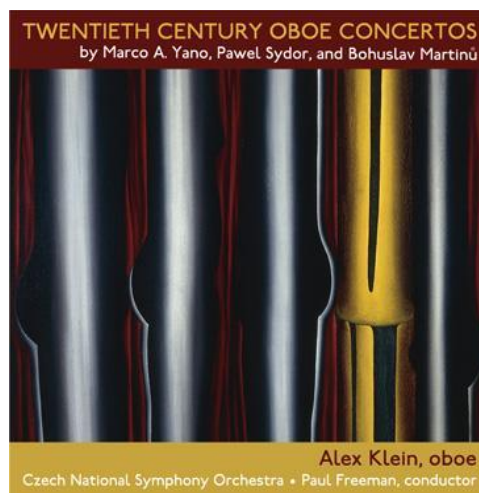


Figure 13 - Album cover of *Twentieth Century Oboe Concertos*.

<sup>118</sup> Alex Klein, Paul Freeman, and Czech National Symphony Orchestra, *Twentieth Century Oboe Concertos*, CD, Chicago: Cedille Records, 2005, booklet: 3-9.

<sup>119</sup> Jeanne Belfy, “Reviews,” *The Double Reed* 29, no.3 (2006): 147-148.

The album *Solos - Solo Works of Daniel Asia* was released by Summit Records in 2005. A collection of unaccompanied solo compositions for multiple instruments by Daniel Asia, the album includes: *The Alex Set* for oboe, *Plum-DS II* for flutes, *Orange* for viola, *Marimba Music*, and *Dream Sequence I* for trombone. *The Alex Set* is a set of five pieces for unaccompanied oboe, dedicated to Alex Klein. The work was recorded by Alex in Chicago, November 2002.<sup>120</sup>

In the next year, 2006, the first edition of the Santa Catarina Music Festival (FEMUSC) was held in Jaraguá do Sul, Santa Catarina, Brazil.<sup>121</sup> Klein was the founder and artistic director of this festival, and since its inauguration, the FEMUSC has brought together numerous music students and teachers from around the globe. During the two weeks of the festival, students participate in lessons, master classes, and concerts, under the instruction of renowned teachers and performers. Also, the festival provides numerous in-house and outreach concerts, reaching multiple communities from the “Vale do Itajaí” region in Santa Catarina.<sup>122</sup> Since its foundation, in 2006, the FEMUSC has served a public of over 350,000 people in concerts and promoted events.<sup>123</sup>

The album *Britten & Bliss* was released also in 2006 by Cedille Records. For this album, Alex Klein and the Vermeer Quartet - violins Shmuel Ashkenasi and Mathias Tacke, viola Richard Young, and cello Mark Johnson - recorded the *Quintet for Oboe and String Quartet* (1927) by Arthur Bliss (1891-1975) and the *Phantasy Quartet, Op. 2* (1932) for oboe, violin,

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<sup>120</sup> Alex Klein, Robert Dick, Hong-Mei Xiao, Paul Fadoul, and Benny Sluchin, *Solos - Solo Works of Daniel Asia*, CD, Tempe, AZ: Summit Records, 2005, booklet.

<sup>121</sup> Elly Fishman, “The Improbable Encore.”

<sup>122</sup> “Femusc,” *Femusc - Festival de Música de Santa Catarina*, accessed November 20, 2018, <http://www.femusc.com.br/en/>

<sup>123</sup> “Femusc,” *Duas Rodas*, accessed November 25, 2018, <https://www.duasrodas.com/en/project/femusc>.

viola, and cello by Benjamin Britten (1913–1976.) Both recordings were made in Chicago, October 2005. The album also includes Britten's *String Quartet No. 3, Op. 94* (1975.)<sup>124</sup>

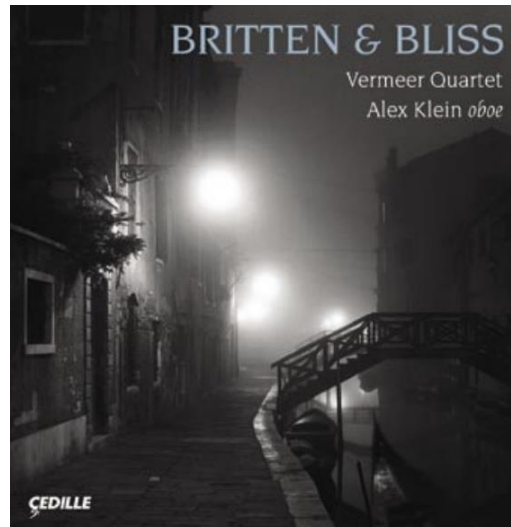


Figure 14 - Album cover of *Britten and Bliss*.

On February 10, 2006, professor James Caldwell passed away after a struggle with lung cancer. In an obituary note at *The Double Reed*, Klein expressed his great admiration for Caldwell:

James Caldwell was too big a person for just one activity. He was a great teacher and artist, a philosopher, a bonsai aficionado, an avid collector, and a wonderful mentor. He excelled at everything. He opened the door to the world. He saw joy and beauty in every millimeter of life, and he brought his vast knowledge and experience into the practice of his teaching. I am sorry for the generations of musicians who will not have the opportunity to study with him.<sup>125</sup>

During the year after Professor Caldwell's death, Klein was appointed professor of oboe at his *alma mater*, Oberlin Conservatory of Music.<sup>126</sup> In 2008, the album *Poetic inspirations* -

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<sup>124</sup>Alex Klein, Shmuel Ashkenasi, Mathias Tacke, Richard Young, and Mark Johnson, *Britten & Bliss*, CD, Chicago: Cedille Records, 2006, booklet.

<sup>125</sup>Jay Light, "Obituaries," *The Double Reed* 29, no.1 (2006): 19.

<sup>126</sup>"New Faculty Members," *Oberlin Conservatory Magazine*, 2007, [http://www2.oberlin.edu/con/connews/2007/of\\_note.html](http://www2.oberlin.edu/con/connews/2007/of_note.html) (accessed November 24, 2018).



*Works for Oboe, Viola & Piano* was released by Cedille Records, which Klein recorded with violist Richard Young and pianist Ricardo Castro *Schilflieder* (Songs of the Reeds), Op. 28 (1872) by August Klughardt (1847-1902), *Two Rhapsodies for Oboe, Viola, and Piano* (1901) by Charles Martin Loeffler (1861-1935), *The Nymph's Complaint for the Death of her Fawn* (1921) by Felix White (1884-1945), *Modinha* (1984) by Marco Aurélio Yano (1963-1991), and the *Trio for Viola, Heckelphone, and Piano, Op. 47* (1928) by Paul Hindemith (1895-1963). The album was recorded in Chicago, April and October 2007. In the booklet notes, Klein stated that the piece *Modinha* was composed as a gift to him from the composer and friend Marco Aurélio Yano in 1984. The album also presents this recording as a world premiere recording.<sup>127</sup>

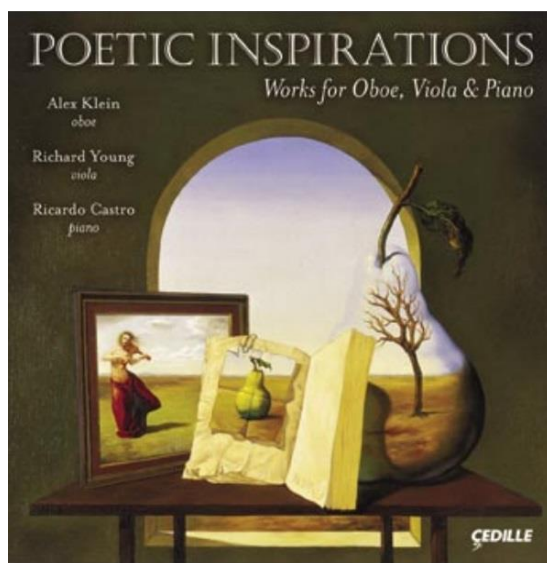


Figure 15 - Album cover of *Poetic Inspirations*.

On December 11, 2008, Alex Klein's third child, Alexandre Frederico Klein, was born in Curitiba, Brazil. Frederico was named after Klein's grandfather Friedrich Raiter and after Catalina's brother Federico Guevara. On August 25, 2010, Alex Klein's fourth child, Nina Aura

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<sup>127</sup>Alex Klein, Richard Young, and Ricardo Castro, *Poetic inspirations - Works for Oboe, Viola & Piano*, CD, Chicago: Cedille Records, 2008, booklet.

Klein, was born in Curitiba, Brazil. Nina Aura was named after Klein's godmother Aura Gallina. Klein's godmother was very important to him.<sup>128</sup>

In October 2010, Alex Klein was appointed principal conductor of the Municipal Symphony Orchestra of São Paulo and artistic director of the Municipal Theater of São Paulo. The first time Klein conducted this orchestra was in 2004, shortly after his departure from Chicago. Klein's name was suggested in a list made by the orchestra musicians, and his contract was signed for a three-year period until December 2013.<sup>129</sup> Klein was hired while the Municipal Theater was experiencing an administrative crisis. After two years of restorations in the main concert hall and no seasons planned, Klein's expertise as a former musician in a world-famous orchestra and as an international soloist was used to end this crisis. The next year, 2011, was the centennial season of the institution and a special season was to be planned to celebrate it. However, after continuous conflicts with the theater administration and multiple changes in the planning for the season, Klein decided to resign in February 2011.<sup>130</sup>

David Stock finished composing his work *Oborama* in 2010, commissioned by and dedicated to Alex Klein, a solo concerto for the oboe instrument family – musette or piccolo oboe, oboe, oboe d'amore, English horn, and bass oboe – played by one soloist and orchestra.<sup>131</sup> According to Klein, this is the "first piece ever written for all five oboes." The North-American premiere was on June 15, 2011, during the Sunflower Music Festival in Topeka, Kansas.<sup>132</sup> The

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<sup>128</sup> Alex Klein, text messages to author, November 2018.

<sup>129</sup> Daniel Salles, "Alex Klein assume o comando da Orquestra Sinfônica Municipal," *Veja São Paulo*, October 15, 2010, <https://vejasp.abril.com.br/cidades/orquestra-sinfonica-municipal-alex-klein-oboista-maestro/> (accessed November 24, 2018).

<sup>130</sup> "Alex Klein pede demissão da direção artística do Teatro Municipal," *Concerto*, February 11, 2011, <https://www.concerto.com.br/noticias/arquivo/alex-klein-pede-demissao-da-direcao-artistica-do-teatro-municipal> (accessed November 24, 2018).

<sup>131</sup> Alex Klein, André Cárdenes, Lisa Pegher, Gil Rose, and Boston Modern Orchestra Project, *David Stock: Concertos*, CD, Malden, MA: BMOP/sound, 2016, booklet: 6.

<sup>132</sup> Bill Blankenship, "Concerto Serves Five Flavors of Oboe Music," *The Double Reed* 34, no. 2 (2011): 25.

world premiere of *Oborama* was five months earlier, on January 27, 2011, in Jaraguá do Sul, Santa Catarina, Brazil, during the 2011 edition of the Santa Catarina Music Festival - FEMUSC.<sup>133</sup>

On March 4, 2011, Alex Klein premiered the concerto *Duels and Dances* by James Stephenson. This concerto was written for five oboes - musette or piccolo oboe, oboe, oboe d'amore, English horn, and bass oboe - played by one soloist and wind ensemble. The premiere was with the United States Marine Band "The President's Own" at the American Bandmasters Association 77th annual conference in Norfolk, Virginia.<sup>134</sup> *Duels and Dances* was commissioned by the Minnesota Commissioning Club and dedicated to Alex Klein. Further, the concerto version for chamber orchestra also was dedicated to and premiered by Alex Klein and the St. Barts Festival Orchestra.<sup>135</sup>

In January 2012, Alex Klein was appointed by the Paraíba State Culture Office (Secult) as the principal conductor of the Symphony Orchestra of Paraíba (OSPB,) replacing João Linhares. This orchestra was also undergoing an administrative crisis, and Klein's expertise was to be used to end it. Also in April 2012, Klein founded and spearheaded the El Sistema based Program of Social Inclusion through Music (PRIMA) in Paraíba.<sup>136</sup> In March 2013, Alex Klein

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<sup>133</sup> Rafaela Mazzaro, "A estrela de quinta-feira é o oboé," *Clic RBS* (blog), *Festival de Música de Santa Catarina*, January 26, 2011, <http://wp.clicrbs.com.br/femusc/2011/01/26/a-estrela-de-quinta-feira-e-o-oboe/> (accessed November 24, 2018).

<sup>134</sup> "Our History," *The President's Own United States Marine Band*, accessed November 24, 2018, <https://www.marineband.marines.mil/About/Our-History/>

<sup>135</sup> James M. Stephenson, "Duels and Dances," *Stephenson Music*, accessed November 24, 2018, <https://composerjim.com/works/duels-and-dances/>

<sup>136</sup> Tiago Germano, "Secult confirma chegada de Alex Klein como regente da OSPB," *Jornal da Paraíba*, January 4, 2012, <https://www.jornaldaparaiba.com.br/cultura/secult-confirma-chegada-de-alex-klein-como-regente-da-ospb.html> (accessed November 24, 2018).

was appointed principal conductor and artistic director of the Symphony Orchestra of Ribeirão Preto, São Paulo state, Brazil.<sup>137</sup>

In 2016, the album *David Stock: Concertos* was released by Boston Modern Orchestra Project. Alex Klein recorded *Oborama* with the BMOP, under the direction of Gil Rose, at Distler Performance Hall in Medford, Massachusetts, on May 31, 2013. Besides *Oborama*, the album also presents Stock's *Concierto Cubano* for violin and orchestra performed by Andrés Cárdenes, and the *Percussion Concerto* performed by Lisa Pegher.<sup>138</sup>

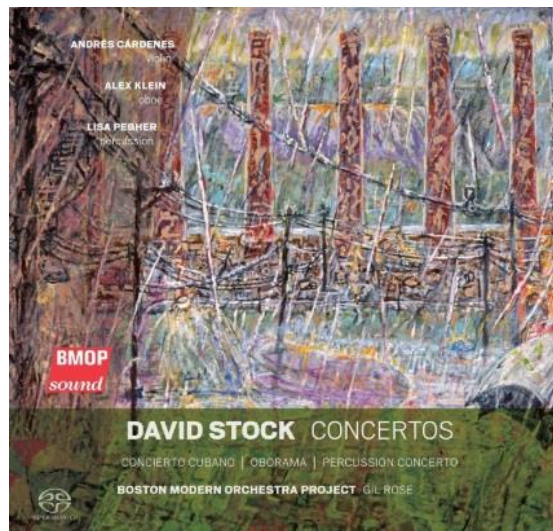


Figure 16 - Album cover of *David Stock: Concertos*.

## The Return

In 2016, Klein was invited by John Deverman, Chicago Symphony Orchestra's Director of Orchestral Personnel, to perform during two weeks in April with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. Arriving in Chicago, Klein received the news that the principal oboe chair was vacant

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<sup>137</sup> "Alex Klein assume a Sinfônica de Ribeirão Preto," *Concerto*, February 21, 2013, <https://www.concerto.com.br/noticias/arquivo/alex-klein-assume-sinfonica-de-ribeirao-preto> (accessed November 24, 2018).

<sup>138</sup> Alex Klein, Andrés Cárdenes, Lisa Pegher, Gil Rose, and Boston Modern Orchestra Project, *David Stock: Concertos*, CD, Malden, MA: BMOP/sound, 2016, booklet.

due to the departure of the former CSO's principal oboist, Eugene Izotov, to San Francisco.<sup>139</sup> Initially, Klein was not sure if he should apply for the position because of his limitations caused by the Dystonia. His first reaction when invited to the audition was to decline.<sup>140</sup> However, after encouragement from colleagues and the CSO's music director Riccardo Muti, Klein decided to re-audition for his former position. The auditions were held in June 2016 and Klein was offered the position again.<sup>141</sup> He accepted the position at CSO and moved back from Paraíba to Chicago. When Klein left as Director of the Prima in 2016, the project had already created music schools and youth orchestras in ten cities, serving over 1500 children.<sup>142</sup>

Klein wrote the article "Focal Dystonia and Me" published by *The Double Reed* in 2016. This extensive article, written in form of a letter, exposes Klein's comprehensive perspective and personal experience with the disorder. In the article's preface, he briefly explained the silver lining between his understanding of the disorder, his strategies to overcome it, and his unprecedented attempt of assuming the principal chair at the Chicago Symphony while coping with Dystonia effects and limitations. As Klein observes:

I resigned my position as Principal Oboe with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra in 2004 due to the consequences of acquiring Musicians' Focal Dystonia. I subsequently re-auditioned successfully for the same position in June, 2016. My return does not mean I have found a cure for Focal Dystonia, nor an escape for its consequences. I now have the advantage of foreknowledge of the situation and what I believe is a viable plan to continue performing. Only time will tell if this strategy will prove consistent enough to warrant my permanence in the orchestra. A solution is not a *cure*, but for all practical purposes it might be just as useful.

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<sup>139</sup> Eugene Izotov is the principal oboist of the San Francisco Symphony Orchestra. He was appointed principal oboist of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra in 2005, succeeding Alex Klein after his resignation. Short bio available at: "Biography," *Eugene Izotov*, accessed November 25, 2018, <http://www.oboesolo.com/biography.html>.

<sup>140</sup> John von Rhein, "How the CSO's top oboist overcame neurological disorder to play again," *Chicago Tribune*, August 11, 2016, <https://www.chicagotribune.com/entertainment/music/vonrhein/ct-alex-klein-cso-oboe-20160810-column.html> (accessed November 25, 2018).

<sup>141</sup> Elly Fishman, "The Improbable Encore," *Chicago Magazine*, January 17, 2017, <https://www.chicagomag.com/Chicago-Magazine/February-2017/Oboe-Alex-Klein/> (accessed November 20, 2018).

<sup>142</sup> João Luiz Sampaio, "Mesmo com doença neurológica sem cura, brasileiro vai integrar a Sinfônica de Chicago," *Estadão*, July 19, 2016, <https://cultura.estadao.com.br/noticias/musica,mesmo-com-doenca-neurolologica-sem-cura-brasileiro-vai-integrar-a-sinfonica-de-chicago,10000063654> (accessed November 24, 2018).

Invariably, while discussing diseases, medical experimentation, job loss and other complications, one may acquire a perception of pessimism. Indeed, this article is fraught with catastrophic situations, often with the most painful outcomes. Still, the silver lining is felt at every detail, particularly if we consider my return to the Chicago Symphony. Also, Focal Dystonia has permitted - or...forced - a diversification of my human and musical experience to levels I could not imagine back when I mostly played oboe. These two decades of dealing with Dystonia have not been “lost”, nor void of life-changing musical moments, particularly for my understanding of what music does to human beings, and how it works. I am able to perform today by understanding my limitations and working within them, both in the amount of time I play, the position of my hand, adjustments I made to the oboe itself, careful reed making, using sensory tricks, and by relearning how to play and express music within these limitations, technically and expressively, without allowing the old tarnished brain pathway to control my playing.<sup>143</sup>

Alex Klein first concert as the CSO’s re-appointed principal oboe was in August 5, 2016, at the Ravinia Festival.<sup>144</sup> He is the only principal player to be hired twice in the Chicago Symphony Orchestra’s history, “and in two different centuries,” Klein jokes.<sup>145</sup> However, in April 2017, at the end of the season, and at the end of Klein’s probation period, he was denied tenure by the tenure review committee of orchestra members together with the decision of Riccardo Muti.<sup>146</sup> Instead, Klein was given the “Principal Oboe Emeritus” status by Muti.<sup>147</sup> In the fall semester of 2017, Klein joined the faculty of the School of Music of DePaul University in Chicago.<sup>148</sup> In October 2018, Alex Klein was appointed principal oboe at the Calgary Philharmonic Orchestra in Canada.<sup>149</sup>

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<sup>143</sup> Alex Klein, “Focal Dystonia and Me,” *The Double Reed* 39 no.3 (2016): 48.

<sup>144</sup> “After 12 years away, Alex Klein rejoins the CSO as principal oboe,” *Chicago Symphony Orchestra Sounds & Stories*, August 4, 2016, <https://csosoundsandstories.org/alex-klein-announcement/> (accessed November 25, 2018).

<sup>145</sup> Alex Klein, “Alex Klein celebrates the CSO’s commitment to excellence,” *Chicago Symphony Orchestra Sounds & Stories*, November 15, 2016, <https://csosoundsandstories.org/alex-klein-celebrates-the-cso-commitment-to-excellence/> (accessed November 25, 2018)

<sup>146</sup> John von Rhein, “CSO principal oboe Alex Klein is denied tenure,” *Chicago Tribune*, May 25, 2017, <https://www.chicagotribune.com/entertainment/ct-cso-oboe-alex-klein-denied-tenure-20170524-column.html> (accessed November 25, 2018).

<sup>147</sup> “Alex Klein,” *Loree Paris*, accessed November 25, 2018, <http://www.loree-paris.com/musiciens/alex-klein-3/?lang=en>

<sup>148</sup> “Oboe,” *DePaul School of Music*, accessed November 25, 2018, <https://music.depaul.edu/academics/studios-areas-of-study/Pages/oboe.aspx>

<sup>149</sup> Norman Lebrecht, “Chicago’s Ex-Oboe Becomes Principal in Canada,” *Slipped Disc*, October 14, 2018, <https://slippedisc.com/2018/10/chicagos-ex-oboe-becomes-principal-in-caanda/> (accessed November 25, 2018).



Figure 17 – Alex Klein just appointed Principal Oboe at Calgary Philharmonic Orchestra, 2018, and his oboe with the left-hand keys modified by F. Lorée Paris. Photo extracted from the Calgary Philharmonic Orchestra website.

As conductor, Alex Klein has directed ensembles in Brazil, USA, Mexico, Costa Rica, China, and Europe. He also has been a member of judging panel for competitions in Switzerland, Russia, England, Japan, and USA. Klein continuously leads master classes in top music schools and conservatories worldwide. He also participates regularly - as director, conductor, soloist, teacher, and/or guest artist - in important international festivals such as the Aspen, Sunflower and Santa Fe Music Festivals in USA, and the *Alex Klein Oboe Festival* in China, among many others.<sup>150 151</sup>

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<sup>150</sup> “Alex Klein - Principal Oboe,” *Calgary Philharmonic Orchestra*, accessed November 25, 2018, <https://calgaryphil.com/portfolio-items/alex-klein/>

<sup>151</sup> “Alex Klein, Oboe, Guest Artist Masterclass,” *Washington University in St. Louis - Department of Music*, accessed November 25, 2018, <https://music.wustl.edu/events/682>

## CHAPTER 3

### INTERVIEW WITH ALEX KLEIN<sup>152</sup>

**1. Looking back at your past, (as an artist, teacher, and father) how would you describe yourself as a child, and as a young musician? Are there other things you wish you could have explored more while a student?**

*As a 3rd grader, at age 8 to 9, I was found to be disruptive in school classes, likely due to some kind of attention deficit. Music instruction gave me direction and settled some of my anxieties, enough to do better in school, but hardly a “cure” for what need not be seen as any disease or condition. What I had was an insatiable desire to search for creative output, observing curious reactions around me. I thus developed less interest in exact sciences and more on humanities, as the scientific discoveries led only to the limitations of exact thought (say, the end of an experiment and its conclusion, even if that process led to more questions and is at that point as curious as the humanities), than by the endless reshaping and points of view provided by the fine arts. The humanities provided me with a safe haven for an overly active mind, permitting it to better function and interact with society. It saddens me that today children are too quickly given Ritalin or other mood-enhancing drugs, no doubt robbing many of them of the experiences and discoveries I had. As for exploring other things, I was enamored with everything I could do to further explore music: baroque oboe and early music performance, conducting, composition, and kept an eye out for how all of this is administered in a way consistent with the original intent of the fine arts - that is, avoiding the heartless corporative style and preserving a well-grounded guidance which promotes artistic freedom.*

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<sup>152</sup> The following questions in this questionnaire submitted to Alex Klein were approved by the IRB Protocol Review Committee at West Virginia University on October 10, 2018.



**2. Could you describe your experience with Professor James Caldwell? What are the most important aspects of artistry that you learned from him?**

*James Caldwell was the oboist, artist and philosopher who exerted the greatest influence on me, and that process shows no sign of ending. In my particular case, being curious, creative, driven and self-motivated, Caldwell fit in perfectly to my needs as he was flexible and attentive to each students' individuality and goals - the same was not true of my Curtis experience with Richard Woodhams where I was compelled to fit into a pre-existing set of parameters which not always agreed with my search for individuality and self-expression. Caldwell taught me to look at myself from the outside looking in, and to organize my playing in smaller gobs of information more easily manageable and controlled, to meet challenges not through their level of difficulty but with a sense of purpose and beauty attached to every nuance. This search for beauty, when attached to my curiosity coming from the attention deficit issues, blossomed into an explosion of musical productivity that still drives me to this day.*

**3. In the documentary “Discovery” from the Youth Orchestra of Americas, you talk about Kóaly and the Hungarian language: every first syllable is stressed as a characteristic from a culture, the Huns, and how to express this “indomitable spiritus,” and its fire, with grace on the oboe. Working on one musical phrase, you explored multiple layers of history and culture.<sup>153</sup> Could you explain from where and how you acquired this kind of “cultural knowledge”? (Caldwell, CSO, personal research?) Also, how important is this kind of knowledge to your musical interpretation?**

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<sup>153</sup> *Youth Orchestra of Americas – Discovery*, directed by Andres Faucher, et al. Lobo Productions, 2003. 7'10". Available <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gopviSypOBg>

*I am an immigrant, and have been so since I departed my home at age 17 to go to the university, and then furthermore at 19 when I transferred my studies to the Oberlin Conservatory. As an immigrant I am forced to constantly balance my observations of society with an eye towards my background and another eye towards the unwritten rules of the society I live in. This holds true in personal conversations as well as in a search for proper style. Caldwell was of course instrumental in guiding me towards the dignity of each period and composer. I vividly remember spending many lessons haggling over the proper way of interpreting mid-19th century bell-canto works until I could see the wisdom in his instruction. Same with the Strauss Oboe Concerto, spending three lessons just on the first page until I could understand its flow and inner beauty beyond mere oboe playing - it's interesting to add to this that I eventually earned a Grammy Award with this work, and also played it in the finals of Geneva Competition, when the reviewer for the local newspaper specifically pointed to this issue of the flow in the seemingly repetitive statements by the composer. "Haggling" is the correct word, and is a process which Caldwell approved of, even if it must have been stressful to him, and proved to be a disaster at Curtis, but which provided to me, the student, an opportunity to question knowledge and deepen my absorption of it. It takes a great, phenomenal teacher and thinker to allow this process to take place and still maintain control of the direction teaching is taking. Fast forward to other musical adventures, and this "haggling" provided a background to the fun of discovery in every possible style. Thus, as you mention, the idea of immersing oneself into the emphatic Hungarian rhythms also paired with the way Germanic phrases are sweet but based on a specific tension also related to its language, and how French music achieves direction by welcoming distractions and coloring, and how Iberian music (and that of its colonies) is made up of smaller pieces and the*

*proper use of silence between them. This is all fascinating for a curious mind, and an invitation to explore further, and debate its extent and depth.*

**4. You've worked with numerous renowned artists such as Barenboim and Solti, to name a few. What do you feel when you are making music together with artists of this caliber? Do these people have any direct impact over your performance, interpretation, or life in general?**

*The immediate impact of meeting and working with a superlative star such as the ones you mention is to stand in awe of their presence. Every word they say, every gesture, how they think and address issues, everything is notable and impressive. But this is hardly a professional approach. As soon as possible this awe needs to be replaced with a down-to-earth, back-to-work focus, after all we are only working with them because of a tight selective process, so the studentish sense of inferiority needs to go away so we can perform to their expectations. It was a privilege to work with Solti and also Boulez and Eschenbach, the other main conductors in Chicago, but as music director, it was Daniel Barenboim who exerted the deepest influence on my musical thinking. I recall the day of my audition, in March 1995, when the CSO played an afternoon concert in support of Rachel Barton who had just recently had her accident. Barenboim asked me to sit in and play along, no rehearsal. We played Beethoven's 3rd Piano Concerto, which he conducted from the solo bench and I was sitting exactly opposite him, on the other end of the grand piano. I was floored. For a moment I realized I had never before experienced "real" music. I remember asking myself: "so, THIS is how music is played!". And of course I loved it. Barenboim went on to be one of the strongest influences in my music making, through his vision about sound, legato, connection, tradition vs novelty, and an insatiable*

*commitment to great music in every note. The same I felt about working with the Vermeer Quartet, itself a gigantic name one should be proud to just stand next to. The first time we played together was a rehearsal for the Mozart Oboe Quartet. I was anxious to work with them, of course, and could hardly wait for that rehearsal. As winner of the Geneva Competition, now Principal Oboe of the Chicago Symphony, I felt confident of what I would bring of myself to that program, or in other words, “what could go wrong?”. As it turned out, I felt on that rehearsal what I had felt watching Barenboim from the far end of the piano. “So THIS is how it’s done...” as I set in rehearsal with the Vermeers, dumbfounded at the extreme level of detail they demanded of each other, of myself, and which they were eager to embrace. I eventually performed, went on tour and recorded a CD with the Vermeer. Their influence on me was far greater than in my oboe playing, though. I became obsessed with passing that experience forward, and as soon as it became possible I started a String Quartet Program in Latin America, first at the Curitiba Workshop and eventually with the Santa Catarina Music Festival - FEMUSC. The Vermeer’s violist, Richard Young, has been with me for over 16 years in yearly visits to Brazil and also Colombia, sharing that experience that so enriched my life. In fact, Richard Young created a special project within FEMUSC, called “Serioso Project” in reference to the famous Beethoven quartet, which teaches students the very same level of detail that shocked me on that first encounter with the Vermeer 20 years ago. Serioso has become one of the most sought-after projects at FEMUSC for many years, bringing together an elite group of 16 string players from almost as many countries.*

**5. Since the beginning, your choice of repertoire was unusual. As a student you were already exploring Paganini's Violin Capriccios and more. Also, later you commissioned a new oboe model, with a wider range, so you could perform and record Schubert's Arpeggione sonata. Where does this idea come from? Would you say that the oboe is a limited instrument?**

*The oboe IS a limited instrument. It was late to develop in the 19th century. While Paganini, Joachim, Schumann, Chopin, Liszt, Popper, Czerny and others fiercely developed their instruments to meet new technical and expressive demands already since the beginning of that century, the oboe did not really take a significant jump forward until the 1880s, thus missing several decades of experimentation and development. With that gap - from baroque glory and the reign of Friedrich Ramm during Mozart's days all the way to Pasculli's works 100 years later - the oboe repertory misses not only the years of instrumental experimentation but also the joy of being part of the blossoming republicanism and some of the most beautiful repertory of this genre. Granted, major composers added significant oboe lines to their orchestral works, but we oboe players missed the benefits of having Beethoven, Schumann and Brahms create major chamber works for us as they did for clarinet. With all that in mind, and not wanting to miss any of the fun and power of that 1800-1880s repertory, and I admit my utter jealousy of what my colleagues in other instrument had in their music folder, I ventured into writing my own arrangements of virtuosic pieces written for other instruments, particularly the violin, first with Paganini Caprices and eventually those of Kreisler and Schubert as well. There is another important element to this choice of repertory, having to do with reed making. The first teacher who sat down with me to systematically explain the process of reed making was James Caldwell at Oberlin, this when I was nearly 20 years old. Until then this process was a frustrating hit and*

*miss which caused lifelong bad habits in my breathing, embouchure and endurance, and also preventing me from exploring any repertory which would require great reeds, sound, pitch control and the like, such as oboe sonatas, Schumann Romances and arrangement of gentler, slower works. The virtuoso works allowed me the benefit of learning “something” while I waited for better days with my reeds. This was so bad for me that on two occasions at age 18 I decided to quit oboe, so frustrated I was with the amount of time and energy (and expense) I was putting into reed making, without equal gain in quality. It only took a few days for my friends to encourage me to not give up and I came back to the oboe, but it serves to illustrate why the virtuosic repertory was features so prominently in my repertory. It was because I was pretty much unable to do anything else. It would take me 5 or 6 hours of practicing to create enough endurance to sustain me for a 20-minute Haydn Concerto or Poulenc Sonata.*

**6. You were appointed principal oboe at the Chicago Symphony Orchestra in 1995. In 2004, you had to resign due to the consequences of Focal Dystonia. Then, in 2016, twelve years after your resignation, you learned how to cope with the disorder, adapted yourself, relearned how to play the oboe, and got the same position back. How was the second audition compared to the first? Also, how was the feeling of walking through the stage again and giving the A in your first rehearsal as a newly appointed member of the CSO? What are the differences and similarities between 1995 and 2016?**

*It was a long and slow process to relearn the oboe or adapt myself to it. For the first four years or so after leaving the CSO I didn't play much, and it was very painful for me to stay away from an instrument which defined my life since I first set eyes on it. As can be expected, the expectations were very high for that second audition. To make matters worse I fell for the Zika*

*virus that same month, just two weeks prior to the audition. I was still under the effect of the virus on audition day, and had to walk carefully and slowly. I was well prepared, though, and had the advantage of having played 9 years in that hall which has tricky acoustics for woodwinds. I was well received by my colleagues and felt like a kid at Christmas walking through the CSO hallways again. I can't say it was a dream come true because I have already given up on that dream. Being back on the CSO was one of the most beautiful moments of my life, and as it turned out was too good to be true. The CSO changed a lot with Muti. One of the issues I particularly admired in Chicago during my earlier days was the solid foundation built on top of previous Music Directors. Barenboim wanted a luscious sound, sweet yet with an inner energy, thought provoking and dreamlike at the same time. But the CSO still maintained the edge added by 27 years of Sir Georg Solti's leadership. With many members having been hired by Fritz Reiner, I also got to hear many stories about that era, from the precision and concentration Reiner demanded all the way to the financial benefits earned by the bars near Orchestra Hall as musicians headed there after rehearsals (...). I even met a Board Member who said she could still detect the "Frederick Stock sound" in the CSO (Stock led the CSO until the mid-1930s!). The point here is that the Chicago Symphony was a collection and amalgamation of different music ideas, presented by generations of stellar musicians. It was inevitable for me to pay respect to my predecessors, particularly Ray Still who sat in the Principal Oboe chair for one third of the orchestra's existence. Daniel Barenboim didn't argue with any of this, and seemed strong enough in his musical beliefs to add his ideas on top of the work done by others. I would even add that Barenboim didn't just tolerate different opinions and backgrounds, but he purposely incited controversy and led people to take a chance, have an opinion, and confront him with it. For me this was a very difficult task to do because I so admired him and grew up in a*

*Military Dictatorship learning to never ever under any circumstances disagree or challenge authority. However, the CSO I found in 2016 had changed. There was no sign of Barenboim's mellowness, of Solti's edge, of the anxiety which accompanied any talk about the Reiner years. There was no big sounding "Chicago brass", no drive in the winds and strings. The CSO now plays with a smaller sound, delicate even, subtle and submissive. Muti's sound is not "bad" by any means, in fact I think the orchestra sounds fabulous, but...it is not the Chicago Symphony I once knew. That CSO is dead, or at the very least bound and silenced in the basement somewhere. I noticed this in particular when we played Mahler and Strauss, both composers whose works were made into astonishing sound displays by the old CSO. In Strauss' Zarathustra there is a gorgeous string choir not long after the famous beginning. Through modulations and suspensions Strauss creates string heaven, and when we recorded it with Boulez - himself not a big fan of big sounds - I remember being thrilled of being there next to that vociferous blood-boiling string sound. What amazing writing, and what amazing playing. Not anymore. The CSO now plays that passage with a sound weight similar to what it used to apply for Schubert. That is how disappointed I was, even as I admire the soft, suave moments which the old CSO could only dream of, for example in the slow movement of Mahler 4. Muti's rendering is outstanding, and it was astonishing to watch him lift one finger of his left hand and then hear a small crescendo in the first violins. It is beautiful, but this is not the Chicago Symphony we celebrated for 120 years. It is a new orchestra, a new sound. Also gone is the inner energy of the group. Rehearsals are now tomb quiet, not a peep, while in the old days it was common for us to quietly discuss score issues while the conductor talked to a different section. Not so with Muti. Any noise whatsoever is worthy of a stare or worse, and the musicians obviously were trained by him over the years to*



*behave in such a manner. However this may be judged, good or bad, the CSO I once loved is no more.*

**7. You are an artist, teacher, social entrepreneur, conductor, and successfully reinvented yourself after Dystonia. Your list of major achievements is quite long. Looking to the past and present, how do you feel today? In your mind, who is Alex Klein? What are your goals and expectations? Any dreams not achieved yet?**

*My name is Alexandre Henrique Klein. “Alex Klein”, the person with all these accolades and accomplishments is a figure invented by those who choose to see me in that light. I look at my family, my beautiful wife, my lovely children, at the thousands of students whose lives I’ve been privileged to touch and care for, and I can’t wait for the next adventure. I feel a divide between the person I think I am and the person I perceive other people looking at when they see me. I thus shy away from major crowds and prefer an environment where we can get down to earth and act positively towards something of true value. I hasten to add that the changes brought by Focal Dystonia and what I had to endure emotionally because of it have changed my life and consequently my music. This is not necessarily a bad thing. I am at peace with most of these changes, and feel the emotional weight only when I consider what my children, and my eldest son in particular, had to suffer because of what I went through, and still do. But life goes on, and while it does I have many dreams yet to be realized, enough to fill many buckets in my list. There will be recordings, and many more FEMUSCs, and performances to cheer.*

## CHAPTER 4

### CONCLUSION

As one of the most important oboists of his time, Alex Klein has a very active career as performer, teacher, and conductor. Further, he is a social entrepreneur, responsible for the foundation of multiple music festivals and social projects around the world. Among them, the FEMUSC is the largest school-festival in Latin America and one of the most important academic festivals worldwide.<sup>154</sup>

Throughout the years, Klein served as inspiration to many composers, widely enriching the oboe's repertoire and discography. An active pioneer, he is directly responsible for the commissions of multiple contemporary compositions, such as Yano's oboe concerto, *Virtuti Militari* by Pawel Sydorv, *Duels and Dances* by James Stephenson, and *Oborama* by David Stock, which was commissioned to be performed using five instruments of the oboe's family. Klein went even further when he commissioned F. Lorée to build a new model of oboe, with a wider range, to perform and record unexplored repertoire such as Schubert's *Sonata in A minor, D.821, Arpeggione*. Consequently, he pushed the known limits of oboe playing to a new edge.

Klein's remarkable return to the Chicago Symphony in 2016, twelve years after his resignation due to the onset of Focal Dystonia, is an unprecedented event in music history. Focal Dystonia is a neurological disorder that affects between 8 and 15% of professional musicians who seek medical attention in performing art centers.<sup>155</sup> Klein's struggle with the condition and his remarkable accomplishments while dealing with the disease may serve as inspiration, specially to the ones who struggle daily with neurological disorders such as Dystonia.

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<sup>154</sup> "Femusc," *Duas Rodas*, accessed November 25, 2018, <https://www.duasrodas.com/en/project/femusc>.

<sup>155</sup> Stephan Schuele and Richard J Lederman, "Long-Term Outcome of Focal Dystonia in String Instrumentalists," *Movement Disorders* 19, no. 1 (2004): 43.

## ALEX KLEIN'S TIMELINE

- 1964 - Alex Klein was born.
- 1968 - Klein's family moved to Curitiba.
- 1974 - Klein attended for the first time an orchestral concert and started to study music.
- 1975 - Klein started to take oboe lessons at EMBAP and received his first oboe.
- 1976 - Klein joined the Camerata Antiqua de Curitiba and started taking lessons with Masano in São Paulo.
- 1979 - The album *La Noce Champêtre* by Continental Records was released (LP).
- 1982 - Klein started college at UNESP and won the OSESP Young Soloist Competition.
- 1983 - Klein won the OSPA Young Soloist and the Piracicaba Competitions.
- 1984 - Klein won the OSESP Young Conductor Competition and moved to USA to study at Oberlin under Professor James Caldwell.
- 1986 - Alex Klein married Marlise Gnutzmann Botelho and started to study at Curtis.  
- Klein was awarded First Prize at the *Lucarelli International Competition for Solo Oboe Players* and First Prize at the *6th Fernand Gillet Performance Competition*.  
- Klein was named "Best Interpreter of Czech Music" at the *Prague Spring International Competition* in Czechoslovakia.
- 1987 - Klein enrolled in the Artist Diploma at Oberlin under Professor Caldwell.  
- Klein was awarded First Prize in the *Aspen Music Festival Woodwind Competition*.
- 1988 - Klein was awarded First Prize at the *Concours Internationale d'Execution Musicale of Geneva* and top prize at the second *International Oboe Competition of Tokyo*.  
- Klein commissioned Yano's oboe concerto.
- 1989 - Klein started to teach oboe at Oberlin.  
- The album *1988 International Competition for Musical Performers, Geneva: the First-Prize Winners* by Swiss Radio International Transcriptions was released (CD).
- 1990 - The album *O baroque: Music for Three Oboes and Strings* was released by MCA Records.
- 1991 - Klein started to teach at the University of Washington.  
- Yano finished the manuscripts of the Oboe Concerto.

- 1992 - Pawel Sydorov composed *Virtuti Militari* for Alex Klein.
- 1995 - Klein's first child, Stephan Klein, was born in Seattle.  
 - The album *Vivaldi Oboe Concerti* was released by Musical Heritage Society.  
 - Klein joined Chicago Symphony Orchestra and started to teach at Northwestern University in Evanston.  
 - Recording of Wagner's *Die Meistersinger* with Solti and the Chicago Symphony.  
 - Recording of Mahler's *Ninth Symphony* and compositions by Varèse with Boulez and the Chicago Symphony.
- 1996 - Klein debuted as soloist with the CSO playing the Strauss Oboe Concerto.  
 - The album *Quinteto de Sopros de Curitiba* was released by Elysium.  
 - The album *Soni Ventorum Wind Quintet plays Smith & Schoenberg* was released by Musical Heritage Society.
- 1997 - The album *Dixit Dominus - Te Deum Laudamus* was released by Paulus Records.  
 - The album *25th Anniversary International Double Reed Society* was released by Crystal Records.  
 - The album *Die Meistersinger Von Nürnberg* was released by Decca and awarded at the 40th Grammy Award - Best Opera Recording.
- 1998 - Alex Klein's second child, Ani Klein, was born in Chicago.  
 - First symptoms of Focal Dystonia started to surface.  
 - Recording of the Strauss Oboe Concerto with Barenboim and the CSO.  
 - The album *Symphony no. 9* was released by Deutsche Grammophon and awarded at the 41st Grammy Award - Best Orchestral Performance.
- 1999 - Klein joined the faculty of Roosevelt University in Chicago.  
 - The albums *Oboe Concertos of the Classical Era* and *Early Chamber Music of Elliott Carter* were released by Cedille Records.  
 - The albums *Fantasies and Partitas* and *The Greatest Works Schubert [N]ever wrote for the Oboe* were released by Boston Records.
- 2000 - Klein's fingers curled into the palm of the hand after an accident while performing the *Peter and the Wolf* with the CSO.  
 - The album *Brazilian Rhapsody* was released by Teldec.
- 2001 - Klein was diagnosed with Focal Dystonia.  
 - The album *Richard Strauss - Wind Concertos* was released by Teldec and awarded at the 44th Grammy Award - Best Instrumental Soloist Performance (with Orchestra).  
 - The album *Boulez conducts Varèse* was released by Deutsche Grammophon and awarded at the 44th Grammy Award - Best Orchestral Performance.
- 2002 - Alex Klein and Marlise Klein are divorced.

- 2003 - Yano Oboe Concerto was premiered by Klein in Prague.
- 2004 - Klein resigned his position at the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and moved back to Brazil.  
- The album *Wind Concertos* was released by Cedille Records.
- 2005 - The album *Twentieth Century Oboe Concertos* was released by Cedille Records.  
- The album *Solos - Solo Works of Daniel Asia* was released by Summit Records.
- 2006 - Alex Klein and Catalina Guevara got married.  
- Inaugural season of FEMUSC.  
- The album *Britten & Bliss* was released by Cedille Records.
- 2007 - Klein was appointed Professor of Oboe at Oberlin.  
- The album *Soloists of the Orchestra III* was released by Chicago Symphony Orchestra.
- 2008 - Alex Klein's third child, Alexandre Frederico Klein, was born in Curitiba.  
- The album *Poetic inspirations - Works for Oboe, Viola & Piano* was released by Cedille Records.
- 2010 - Alex Klein's fourth child, Nina Aura Klein, was born in Curitiba.  
- The album *Liquid Melancholy* was released by Cedille Records.  
- Klein was appointed Principal Conductor of the Municipal Symphony Orchestra of São Paulo and Artistic Director of the Municipal Theater of São Paulo.
- 2011 - The concertos *Oborama* by David Stock and *Duels and Dances* by James Stephenson were premiered by Alex Klein.
- 2012 - Klein was appointed Principal Conductor of the Symphony Orchestra of Paraíba.  
- PRIMA was launched.
- 2013 - Klein was also appointed Principal Conductor and Artistic Director of the Symphony Orchestra of Ribeirão Preto.
- 2016 - Klein returned to Chicago Symphony Orchestra as principal oboe.  
- The album *David Stock: Concertos* was released by Boston Modern Orchestra Project.
- 2017 - Klein was given the *Chicago Symphony Orchestra Principal Oboe Emeritus* status by Riccardo Muti.  
- Klein joined the faculty of DePaul University.
- 2018 - Alex Klein was appointed principal oboe at Calgary Philharmonic Orchestra in Canada.
- 2019 - The album *Twentieth Century Oboe Sonatas* was released by Cedille Records.

## SELECTIVE DISCOGRAPHY OF ALEX KLEIN, OBOIST

### General Format:

**Name of the Album.** Label, Year, Format.

- Composer: Name of the composition in which Alex Klein is performing. (extra details) {instrument, if different than the oboe family} / other composition(s) by the same composer.
- Additional composer(s) and work(s), etc.
- \*(#) Award details

### Concertos for Oboe and Orchestra

**O baroque: Music for three Oboes and Strings.** MCA Records, 1990, CD.

- Georg Philipp Telemann: Overture, suite for 3 oboes, strings & continuo in C major, TWV 55:C6 / Overture, suite for 3 oboes, strings & continuo in G minor, TWV 55:g4.
- Georg Friedrich Händel: Entrance of the Queen of Sheba, HWV 67 (3rd oboe part composed by Thomas Z. Shepard).
- Tomaso Albinoni: Concerto for trumpet, three oboes, bassoon and continuo in C major.

**Vivaldi Oboe Concerti.** Musical Heritage Society, 1995, CD.

Also released as *Vivaldi Oboe Concertos*. Cedille Records, 2010, CD.

- Antonio Vivaldi: Concerto for Oboe and Strings in A Minor, F. VII, No. 13 / Concerto for Oboe and Strings in D Major, F. VII, No. 10 / Concerto for Oboe and Strings in C Major, F. VII, No. 6 / Concerto for Oboe and Strings in A Minor, F. VII, No. 5 / Concerto for Oboe and Strings in F Major, F. VII, No. 12 / Concerto for Oboe and Strings in D Minor, F. VII, No. 1 / Concerto for Oboe and Strings in C Major, F. VII, No. 11 / Concerto for Oboe and Strings in F Major, F. VII, No. 2

**Bach: The Brandenburg Concertos,** Sony Classical, 1997, CD.

- Johann Sebastian Bach: Brandenburg Concerto no 1 in F major, BWV 1046 / Brandenburg Concerto no 2 in F major, BWV 1047 {Baroque Oboe}

**Oboe Concertos of the Classical Era.** Cedille Records, 1999, CD.

- Franz Krommer: Oboe Concerto No. 1 in F major, Op. 37 / Oboe Concerto No. 2 in F major, Op. 52.
- Johann Nepomuk Hummel: Introduction, Theme, and Variations in F minor, Op. 102.

**Cedille Records 10th Anniversary Sampler.** Cedille Records, 1999, CD.

Franz Krommer: Oboe concerto no. 2, op. 52 (Adagio).

**\*Richard Strauss - Wind Concertos.** Teldec, 2001, CD.

- Richard Strauss: Concerto for Oboe and Small Orchestra in D major, AV 144. (recorded in October 1998, conducted by Daniel Barenboim, Alex Klein performed as soloist with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra.)

(1) This recording was awarded at the 44th Grammy Award (2001) in the category Best Instrumental Soloist Performance (with Orchestra).

***Cedille Records 15th anniversary Sampler.*** Cedille Records, 2004, CD.

- Marco Aurélio Yano: Concerto for Oboe and Orchestra (excerpt).

***Wind Concertos.*** Cedille Records, 2004, CD.

- Domenico Cimarosa: Concerto for Two Flutes in G Major.
- Wilhelm Bernhard Molique: Concertino in G minor for oboe and orchestra.
- Ignaz Moscheles: Concertante for flute and oboe in F major.

***Twentieth Century Oboe Concertos.*** Cedille Records, 2005, CD.

- Bohuslav Martinu: Concerto for Oboe and Small Orchestra.
- Pawel Sydorv: Virtuti Militari (Concerto for Oboe and Orchestra).
- Marco Aurélio Yano: Concerto for Oboe and Orchestra.

***Soloists of the Orchestra III.*** Chicago Symphony Orchestra, 2007, CD.

- Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart: Oboe concerto in C major, K. 271.

***Cedille on the Move.*** Cedille Records, 2009, CD.

- Franz Krommer: Oboe Concerto no. 1 in F major, op. 37 (Rondo).

***Cedille Records: 25 years of recording Chicago's Finest Classical Musicians.*** Cedille Records, 2014, CD.

- Franz Krommer: Oboe Concerto no. 1 in F major, op. 37 (Rondo)

***David Stock: Concertos.*** Boston Modern Orchestra Project, 2016, CD.

- David Frederick Stock: Oborama

***Plegaria.*** Eddie Mora, 2016, CD.

- Eddie Mora: Canto para Oboe y Orquesta de Cámara.

## **Solo**

***Fantasies and Partitas.*** Boston Records, 1999, CD

- Johann Sebastian Bach: Sonata for solo violin No. 1 in G minor, BWV 1001 / Partita for solo violin No. 2 in D minor, BWV 1004 / Sonata for solo violin No. 3 in C major, BWV 1005 / Partita for solo violin No. 3 in E major, BWV 1006 / Partita for solo flute in A minor, BWV 1013.
- Georg Philipp Telemann: Fantasia, for flute No. 1 in A major, TWV 40:2 / Fantasia, for flute No. 2 in A minor, TWV 40:3 / Fantasia, for flute No. 3 in B minor, TWV 40:4 / Fantasia, for flute No. 4 in B flat major, TWV 40:5 / Fantasia, for flute No. 5 in C major, TWV 40:6 / Fantasia, for flute No. 6 in D minor, TWV 40:7 / Fantasia, for flute No. 7 in D major, TWV 40:8 / Fantasia, for flute No. 8 in E minor, TWV 40:9 / Fantasia, for flute No. 9 in E major, TWV 40:10 / Fantasia, for flute No. 10 in F sharp minor, TWV 40:11 / Fantasia, for flute No. 11 in G major, TWV 40:12 / Fantasia, for flute No. 12 in G minor, TWV 40:13.

**Solos - Solo Works of Daniel Asia.** Summit Records, 2005, CD.

- Daniel Asia: The Alex set.

### **Chamber Music**

**La Noce Champêtre.** Continental Records, 1979, LP.

- Jean Hotteterre: La Noce Champêtre.

**Soni Ventorum Wind Quintet plays Smith & Schoenberg.** Musical Heritage Society, 1996, CD.

- William O. Smith: Jazz set for Violin and Wind Quintet.
- Arnold Schoenberg: Wind Quintet, op. 26.

**Quinteto de Sopros de Curitiba.** Elysium, 1996, CD.

- Heitor Villa-lobos: Quinteto em forma de "Choros".
- Osvaldo Lacerda: Quinteto.
- Radamés Gnattali: Suíte para Quinteto de Sopros.
- Julio Medaglia: Suíte de Danças Populares Brasileiras.
- Henrique de Curitiba: Suíte Dançante.
- Ernesto Nazareth: Sarambeque, Atrevidinha (arr. José A. Kaplan).

**Dixit Dominus - Te Deum Laudamus.** Paulus Records, 1997, CD.

- Georg Friedrich Händel: Dixit Dominus, HWV 232.

**Early Chamber Music of Elliott Carter.** Cedille Records, 1999, CD.

- Elliott Carter: Woodwind Quintet / Eight Etudes and a Fantasy for Woodwind Quartet.

**The greatest works Schubert [N]ever wrote for the Oboe.** Boston Records, 1999, CD.

- Franz Schubert: Sonata for Arpeggione & Piano in A minor, D. 821 / Der Hirt auf dem Felsen, D.965 / Sonatina for Violin & Piano in D major, Op.137 No. 1, D.384 / Sonatina for Violin & Piano in A minor, Op. 137 No. 2, D.385.

**Brazilian Rhapsody.** Teldec, 2000, CD.

- Bebu Silveti: Brazilian Rhapsody
- Fernando Brant and Milton Nascimento: Travessia (arr. Bebu Silveti)
- Luiz Bonfá and Antônio Maria: Manhã de Carnaval (arr. Bebu Silveti)
- Haroldo Lobo: Tristeza (arr. Bebu Silveti)
- Waldir Azevedo: Pedacinhos do Céu (arr. Bebu Silveti)
- Heitor Villa-Lobos: Bachianas Brasileiras No. 5 (arr. Bebu Silveti)
- Caetano Veloso: Avarandado (arr. Bebu Silveti)
- Chico Buarque and Antônio Carlos Jobim: Sabiá (arr. Bebu Silveti)
- Antônio Carlos Jobim and Vinícius de Moraes: Eu Sei Que Vou Te Amar (arr. Bebu Silveti)
- Ary Barroso: Baia (arr. Bebu Silveti)

**Britten & Bliss.** Cedille Records, 2006, CD.

- Arthur Bliss: Quintet for Oboe and String Quartet.



***Poetic inspirations - Works for Oboe, Viola & Piano.*** Cedille Records, 2008, CD.

- August Klughardt: Schilflieder (Songs of the Reeds), Op. 28.
- Charles Martin Loeffler: Two Rhapsodies for Oboe, Viola, and Piano (L'Etang, La Cornemuse).
- Felix White: The Nymph's Complaint for the Death of her Fawn.
- Marco Aurélio Yano: Modinha.
- Paul Hindemith: Trio for Viola, Heckelphone, and Piano, Op. 47 (Erster Teil, Zweiter Teil: Potpourri).

***Cedille Records 20th anniversary Sampler.*** Cedille Records, 2009, CD.

- August Klughardt: Schilflieder, op. 28 (No. 2. Leidenschaftlich erregt).

***Liquid Melancholy.*** Cedille Records, 2010, CD.

- James M. Stephenson: Colors (Red, Blue, Green, White).

***Encontro.*** SESC, 2016, CD.

- Ernesto Nazareth: Escorregando

***Twentieth Century Oboe Sonatas.*** Cedille Records, 2019, CD.

- York Bowen: Sonata for Oboe and Pianoforte, Op. 85.
- Petr Eben: Oboe Sonata, Op. 1.
- Henry Dutilleux: Sonata for Oboe and Piano.
- Eugène Bozza: Sonata for Oboe and Piano.
- Francis Poulenc: Sonata for Oboe and Piano, FP 185.
- Camille Saint-Saëns: Sonata for Oboe and Piano, Op. 166.

**Orchestral Playing** (Selected Recordings)

***\*Die Meistersinger Von Nürnberg.*** Decca, 1997, CD.

- Richard Wagner: Die Meistersinger Von Nürnberg (recorded in September 1995, conducted by Sir Georg Solti, Alex Klein performed as a member of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra.)  
(2) *This recording was awarded at the 40th Grammy Award (1997) in the category Best Opera Recording*

***\*Symphony no. 9.*** Deutsche Grammophon, 1998, CD.

- Gustav Mahler: Symphony no. 9 (recorded in December 1995, conducted by Pierre Boulez, Alex Klein performed as a member of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra)  
(3) *This recording was awarded at the 41st Grammy Award (1998) in the category Best Orchestral Performance.*

**\*Boulez conducts Varèse**, Deutsche Grammophon, 2001, CD.

- Edgard Varèse: Amériques / Arcana / Déserts / Ionisation (recorded in 1995 and 1996, conducted by Pierre Boulez, Alex Klein performed as a member of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra.)

(4) *This recording was awarded at the 44th Grammy Award (2001) in the category Best Orchestral Performance.*

**\*Richard Strauss - Wind Concertos**. Teldec, 2001, CD.

- Richard Strauss: Horn Concerto 1 in E flat major, op. 11 (recorded in October 1998, conducted by Daniel Barenboim, Alex Klein performed as member of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra.)

(5) *This recording was awarded at the 44th Grammy Award (2001) in the category Best Instrumental Soloist Performance (with Orchestra).*

### **Competitions and Conferences**

**1988 International Competition for Musical Performers, Geneva: the First-Prize Winners.**

Swiss Radio International Transcriptions, 1989, CD.

- Luciano Berio: Sequenza VII.
- Julien-François Zbinden: Concerto pour hautbois et orchestre á cordes, op. 56 (abridged version for oboe and piano).

**25th Anniversary International Double Reed Society.** Crystal Records, 1997, CD.

- Duo pour hautbois et basson by Heitor Villa-Lobos

### **Conducting**

**L'histoire du soldat.** Barts Music Festival, 2013, CD

- Igor Stravinsky: L'histoire du soldat {Alex Klein as conductor}

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## **APPENDIX**

## Appendix 1

Alex Klein wrote an article, written in form of a letter, to *The Double Reed* explaining his case of Focal Dystonia.<sup>156</sup> The document was attached to this research with Alex Klein's permission.<sup>157</sup>

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<sup>156</sup> Alex Klein, "Focal Dystonia and Me," *The Double Reed*, 39, no.3 (2016): 48-62.

<sup>157</sup> Alex Klein, message to the author, November 14, 2018.

## FOCAL DYSTONIA AND ME

In this article I wish to clarify some questions and myths about Focal Dystonia. For my preference, I do this in the style of a personal letter rather than an academic paper. It is a personal issue for me, and the informality of a personal sharing of thoughts grants me the tranquility to be as transparent as this subject requires me to be.

I resigned my position as Principal Oboe with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra in 2004 due to the consequences of acquiring Musicians' Focal Dystonia. I subsequently re-auditioned successfully for the same position in June, 2016. My return does not mean I have found a cure for Focal Dystonia, nor an escape for its consequences. I now have the advantage of foreknowledge of the situation and what I believe is a viable plan to continue performing. Only time will tell if this strategy will prove consistent enough to warrant my permanence in the orchestra. A solution is not a *cure*, but for all practical purposes it might be just as useful.

Invariably, while discussing diseases, medical experimentation, job loss and other complications, one may acquire a perception of pessimism. Indeed, this article *is* fraught with catastrophic situations, often with the most painful outcomes. Still, the silver lining is felt at every detail, particularly if we consider my return to the Chicago Symphony. Also, Focal Dystonia has permitted - or... forced - a diversification of my human and musical experience to levels I could not imagine back when I mostly played oboe. These two decades of dealing with Dystonia have not been "lost", nor void of life-changing musical moments, particularly for my understanding of what music does to human beings, and how it works.

I am able to perform today by understanding my limitations and working within them, both in the amount of time I play, the position of my hand, adjustments I made to the oboe itself, careful reed making, using sensory tricks, and by relearning how to play and express music

within these limitations, technically and expressively, without allowing the old tarnished brain pathway to control my playing.

### **Focal Dystonia Basics**

Dealing with Focal Dystonia has been the greatest challenge in my life, and I am both hurt that it happened to me as I am amazed at the important information and research I came in contact with because of this illness. Ironically, Focal Dystonia has also been one of my greatest mentors.

Dystonia is a neurological condition allowing for the involuntary contraction of muscles. It is a neurological – not muscular – issue located in the brain, outside of our immediate control. "Focal" Dystonia is a narrower version affecting only a particular section of the body. It is a myth to assume that musicians who acquired Dystonia practiced the wrong way, practiced too much or too little, didn't warm up properly, ate the wrong food, or could have done anything to prevent it from setting in. Focal Dystonia comes to professionals and amateurs, cool and stressed people, soloists and orchestra musicians, virtuosos or not, regardless of instrument, age or career length. You will find musicians with Focal Dystonia in professional orchestras just as you will find them in local community ensembles, in students and amateurs.

There is no test or blood exam that can indicate the presence of Focal Dystonia. The diagnosis is made through a process of elimination by neurologists or performing arts medical experts, at the end of which the only plausible explanation remaining is Focal Dystonia. Musicians affected by this illness should seek second opinions - I reached out to four of them - as well as alternative and independent opinions outside of neurology. We do this not out of distrust for these experts, but because the current Focal Dystonia research available is far too limited for

us to pin our hopes solely on neurology. For example, in their professional stature and knowledge neurologists repeatedly alerted me that Focal Dystonia is *incurable* and that I would eventually quit out of frustration for not finding a cure. I did. They were right. But I also took a step back, considering that neurologists are seeing the situation from their point of view, aided by significant but still incomplete research on “how to regain your performance ability after being diagnosed with Focal Dystonia”.

A firm diagnosis may only arrive years later - four or five years in my case - after our conscious and subconscious attempts to compensate for the illness fall short of our objectives and compromise the muscles we use to perform. With Focal Dystonia now being discussed more frequently in musicians’ circles, it is my hope that the diagnosis time may be reduced, as patients will seek the appropriate medical assistance sooner, and rely less on the dismissal of minor symptoms and/or self-made conclusions.

The central issue with Focal Dystonia is the garbled neural message coming from the brain to the affected area, which may leave it void of information and dysfunctional as to the proper movements certain muscles are supposed to do.

Focal Dystonia is "silent", with no apparent sign of the condition setting in. There is no pain, no "click", no dizziness or rash or any identifiable mark that a change has occurred in the way our brain works in the affected area. After one acquires Focal Dystonia our body will make adjustments to the area naturally, automatically. It is beautiful, a bit scary, and curious to see this process at work. Eventually some localized symptoms begin to appear as *consequences* of the original Focal Dystonia event in the brain, such as curled fingers, spasms and certain difficulties with tasks usually done with greater precision, or when the natural adjustments no longer provide sufficient relief. The question remains to me if these are consequences “of Focal Dystonia” or

“of the body’s efforts in making up for the presence of Focal Dystonia”. The latter is a mending attitude, and the former is a direct damage caused by the affected neuron(s).

At this point it is important to understand how the body's supportive systems come to play. Picture, if you will, what appears to be a plastic lawn chair, weighing only a few pounds, and which you can probably lift with just a finger or two and little effort. Upon attempting to lift it, however, you realize it must be made out of iron or lead, or be bolted to the ground. Even without your conscious demand for more muscle power, your body immediately summons support for your fingers, coming from the *flexor*, biceps and even the larger trapeze or pectoral muscles in order to bring your task to completion and lift the chair. Before you know it, your entire body is vested in the task of lifting, without the need for you to consciously call these muscle groups into action.

One of the traits of Focal Dystonia which for me always appeared bizarre is that it is *task-specific*: it will affect only a specific pathway or activity, leaving the arms and fingers free to exercise other similar functions, depending of course on the severity of the condition on the affected area which in some cases may render fingers or an entire hand clenched, apparently atrophied or otherwise compromised. On practical terms it means that Focal Dystonia affects my *oboe* playing, but has negligible influence in my English horn, oboe d'amore, or baroque oboe playing. What we call "playing the oboe" is actually the result of a complex line of synapses between neurons in the brain, bringing together sounds, feelings, touch, past experiences, movements of fingers, memory, precise positioning of dozens of muscles, comparative auditory perception, visual input and just about everything you might think would be remembered as part of the task of “playing an instrument”, including fears, joys and other emotions we choose to associate with playing and add to the mix while practicing, repeated over and over through

decades of practicing and performing. All of this information forms a *pathway* through the brain, connecting it to the fingers, lungs, muscles through the nerves, which then recall what "oboe playing" is as a neurological task and inform the body what it needs to accomplish. This is how come the oboe seems familiar every time we play it. "The strategy of "re-wiring", therefore, or the re-training of the brain to create a new oboe pathway is prone to failure or only limited success, because the brain seems to gravitate towards information it already knows, in pathways already established, even if one of them is faulty.

### **My Particular Situation**

This natural support system also applies to our playing musical instruments. Although Focal Dystonia affected the usage and position of my near-hand muscles, unbeknownst to me the result of years of subconscious compensation for that silent and still undiscovered brain issue left the entire left side of my body affected and tensed, as one muscle group after another attempted to compensate and complete the task of assisting my fingers to move up and down as my playing required. It was not the *weight* of the fingers that was an issue, nor was the repetitiveness of their action, but their *lack of information* and *new finger placement* given by the garbled message coming from the brain which impaired my playing. This flawed information created a new balance between the *extensor*, *flexor* and *pronator* muscles, which is now different than it was when I did my original oboe training. The *pronator* has permanently altered what I consider to be the natural and normal playing for my wrist counterclockwise about 45 degrees, the *flexor* is pulling harder, bringing the affected fingers into the palm of my hand, and the *extensor* had no choice but to accommodate the *flexor*'s pull. In doing so, the *extensor* became overly stretched, resulting in inflamed tendons. While the *pronator quadratus* muscle is located around the wrist



and thus closer to the oboe action, the *pronator teres* runs further back, next to the *flexor*, and it could be questioned whether the closeness of these two muscles might be of significant interest in understanding the changes in my arm. I could also argue, perhaps, that the *extensor* might not even be part of the Focal Dystonia package, but merely an innocent by-stander who was adversely affected by what was going on with the *flexor* and *pronator teres*.

Focal Dystonia affects two fingers of my left hand with involuntary tension of the *flexor* and *pronator* muscles (the 3rd and 4th fingers, or "A" and "G" on the oboe). The 5th finger is affected only due to its proximity and attachment to the 4<sup>th</sup> and by being at the edge of the *pronator*'s 45-degree shift, but it is not affected directly by Focal Dystonia, even if at first we suspected it might. The two affected fingers have curled and clenched into the palm of my hand, but the strength of this clenching varies. On some days it is strongly clenched, but on others not so much, and I observed how this has nothing to do with nerves, temperature, over-playing, repertory or other routines.

I probably acquired Focal Dystonia during my first or second year in the Chicago Symphony (1995-1997), and spent practically my entire 9-year initial tenure with that ensemble coping with this disease, including the Grammy-winning Strauss Concerto recording, the works recorded for Wayne Raper and Boston Records (Schubert, Bach, Telemann) and those recorded for Cedille Records (Yano, Sydor, Martinu, Moscheles, Molique, Krommer and Hummel). The first sign that something odd was happening to my health came during my third season - 1998 - when I visited my family physician complaining of a searing pain in my chest, thinking it could be some kind of heart issue. None was found, but years later I would come to understand how the pectoral muscle was already being stressed towards my left arm, causing this searing sensation on the *sternum* bone, in an attempt to compensate for the effects of Focal Dystonia. This

compensation action by then had already involved the *extensor, flexor, biceps, triceps* and *delta* muscles. All of them were tenser than normal, but I felt little difference because the end result was being taken care of: I could play, normally. If I felt any tension around my arms it was easy to dismiss as part of a myriad of other explanations, from playing too hard with the kids on the day before, or reacting to Chicago's notorious cold winters. Never in my wildest nightmares would I suspect that a neurological condition was already brewing within me.

The tipping point appeared late in the year 2000, when the Chicago Symphony presented Prokofiev's *Peter and the Wolf* in the Family Series I adored so much. As part of the performance, I was asked to "walk like a duck" while I played the oboe lines. As a result, I pulled a muscle in the tail bone area. What appeared to be an independent issue soon fixed with steroids created a cascade effect in all the muscle groups between the lower back and my left hand, causing my fingers to curl into the palm of my hand. One month later I began having difficulty performing works that I've known all my life, such as the Mozart Oboe Quartet, and it would take me unusual amounts of time to learn new music. By March, 2001 I performed Mozart's Concerto with Gerry Schwarz conducting in São Paulo, and needed to practice a full hour of scales before a rehearsal or performance. I realized something was terribly wrong and upon my return to Chicago consulted with our symphony physician, followed by two general neurologists at Chicago's Rush Memorial Hospital and by performing artists specialists Dr. Alice Branfonbrenner at Northwestern Memorial Hospital and Dr. Richard Lederman at the Cleveland Clinic. All four neurologists confirmed I had acquired Focal Dystonia.

Immediately after the diagnosis was confirmed I alerted the orchestra's management of these findings. My Chicago Symphony colleagues and staff were wonderful and supportive to me even as I gradually entered this period of experimentation, looking aimlessly for solutions

and finding none. I will always be grateful to our Assistant Principal Oboe Michael Hensch for rushing to the hall countless times as a last minute substitute when I was in pain or otherwise incapable of playing, to Personnel Manager Carol Lee Iott, and to the Vice-President of Production Vanessa Moss for being by my side as I needed more time off to try different treatments. I could not have asked for more supportive colleagues in a tight moment.

In the months that followed my diagnosis I must have spent nearly 150 hours in physical therapy of various kinds. As an oboist and reed maker used to looking at a complex situation and finding creative solutions, from testy gouging machine measurements to offbeat oboe adjustments which Carlos Coelho often complains to me about, I went about this problem with the same strategy: looking at the whole body and trying to fix anything that might possibly be wrong from a point of view of *balance*, hoping to find a link to whatever it was that led to Focal Dystonia. The comparison with reed-making here is that often the solution is found not by focusing on a small part of it, but in looking at the whole item as a complete working machine. If the neurologists have not *yet* found a solution, then the solution must still exist somewhere. Or so I thought.

### **Searching for a Solution**

Focal Dystonia tends to vary in strength and intensity during the first few years, making tendon tension feel like a moving target. It is difficult to understand exactly how far we can push the muscles in a compensation strategy before the tendons inflame. It leads me to hopes that the illness may not be all that serious, but then again it is. In time, however, Focal Dystonia settles and that limitation becomes a known factor, allowing for better precision in determining how much playing I can do. Using soft treatments such as placing warm towels in the arm prior to

playing and cold ones afterwards, and also making regular use of a tens machine to reduce tension in the muscles granted me some extra months of regular performance. It was a price I was willing to pay in order to continue playing, finishing projects that were important to me, and also learning about the limitations I was dealing with. If Focal Dystonia now had a predictable limit, I could also predict how much playing I can do before I acquired tendinitis as a result of my compensation efforts. This is a limited way of playing, yes, but it is *some* way I can continue to play.

The faulty information coming from the brain often spurts fingers into action without any advance notice, as if it was a sudden reflex. When this happens, the fingers snap into action with far greater intensity, like a muscle *spasm*. I have found that applying greater tension to the muscles of the hand - such as what we oboists normally do when we play with a leaky key - tends to minimize these occurrences, but then again, extra tension while playing may cause tendon inflammations.

Besides being overly tensed, the *flexor* muscle also pulls each of these two affected fingers down at different strengths and directions - and this is where the *pronator* muscle contributes as I explained earlier with the different positions for the “G” and “A” fingers. Because of that counterclockwise 45-degree deviation of the *pronator*, the “G” finger – the one closer to the edge of that *pronator* turn – received an extra pressure downward. The finger thus searches for the g-key somewhere inside the bore, it sticks to the actual key and becomes difficult to lift. It is as if I tell the finger to lift of the key and it would respond that it has already done so from its point of reference, even the key as not lifted. This is because the point of reference tied to the oboe pathway in my brain is set according to the *previous* position of my *pronator* and *extensor* muscles. It is not as simple as just telling the “G” finger to adjust up a bit,

because what we refer to as “G” finger action is in fact a complex code of neurological information built and strengthened over decades of playing. I can’t simply change that pathway without incurring a domino effect of other doubts somewhere else in my overall playing because the “G” finger is not alone in the act of oboe playing or in the “oboe neural pathway”, but is part of a complex set of interactive and interdependent actions and reactions involving all 10 fingers, arms, face, breathing, if not the entire body, intellect, emotional input and everything else that is actively in us being a musician.

The “A” finger, on the other hand, by being more central in the hand, is less affected by what the *pronator* and *extensor* did, and thus is now set on a more distant plain than the “G” finger. I explain: as our *pronator* turns our wrist and hand, the fingers at the edge of that motion (4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> fingers) become more distant from their neighbors, like the 3<sup>rd</sup> finger. This causes a separation which in “normal” oboe playing does not exist. We all learned how to put our fingers in line, and proper technique teaches us to move them equally and in small amounts. The 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> fingers thus move in similar amounts, direction and downward pressure. Not so when the *pronator* turns our hand to the side y 45 degrees. The 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> fingers are taken out of line, and in my case the 3<sup>rd</sup>/middle finger gets stretched away. The fingers which used to be in-line with ease now settle into a comfortable position that looks as if I am holding a small baseball. This means the “A” finger now searches for the a-key somewhere around 5-10mm *above* the actual key and has the opposite action to what I described above with the “G” finger. Because of its tendency to rapidly fly off the key, the “A” finger is the most affected by the spasms common to musicians with Focal Dystonia, being responsible for my giving a “B” to the Chicago Symphony one on occasion.

Regardless of what Focal Dystonia did to my fingers, my concentration was now aimed at going around its effects, and it is precisely this work in opposition to the new finger placements that caused tension, tendinitis, pain and time off playing. To make it clear: Focal Dystonia does not bring tendinitis. It is *the work I do to compensate for it* that does. Focal Dystonia changed the placement of my fingers, so as to make it impossible for them to “find” the oboe and act properly in accordance to the instructions acquired and strengthened over a lifetime of oboe performances. In order to rewire, relocate, reposition the fingers and continue playing I endure some collateral damage, in a way, which permit me to play but needs to be constantly checked to make sure I don’t overdo the tension. Neither Focal Dystonia nor tendinitis permit me to play comfortably, but between the two there is a delicate balance, managed by careful choices and monitoring. If I play too much I may develop tendinitis, and if I play too little, then, well...what is the point of fighting the disease?

### **Sensory Tricks and the “Prepared” Oboe**

It is wrong to assume that fast playing would induce more tension than slow playing. I noticed how playing a Mozart Symphony would leave me with tendon tension much quicker than, say, the Mozart Oboe Concerto. This is because during a long note or slow passage I become more vulnerable to experiencing a spasm. In order to avoid that spasm I apply more pressure on both sides of the arm - *extensor* and *flexor* (the leaky key strategy). When I play faster passages, however, even if I still use some extra tension to make sure the fingers are working properly, their up and down work involves relaxation and blood flow at levels sufficient to overcome some of the extra tension brought by the fast passages. In this context, playing fast does add tension, but not as much as playing a long note or slow passage, even if this does seem

odd. The trick is that in order to play any of these pieces – slow or fast – I need to practice as little as it is absolutely necessary, or else I may accrue more tension than can be released during down time, and thus risk the onset of tendinitis as the tension adds up every time I play.

I also sought ideas in the experiences of other musicians with Focal Dystonia, who spoke to me of "*sensory tricks*" and other means of coping with the limitations at hand. Sensory tricks are attempts to convey a misleading message to the brain, making it search for solutions away from the damaged pathway. As such, as far as my brain is concerned, I no longer finger the "oboe", but something akin to a saxophone, as my fingers no longer reach the oboe in a straight line, but slightly curved outward. After some experimentation I added a large coin glued to the G-key providing an extension for my fourth finger. With sensory tricks and alterations to the oboe I can bypass the pathway in the brain that tells me how to "play oboe" and simply create a different one - albeit similar in many ways.

During the initial six months after the diagnosis I tried various therapies, experimented with finger weights, taking small amounts of time off from playing, added intense stretching exercises and warm-ups, visited chiropractors, massage therapy, posture work, acupuncture, performed selected repertory, limited or cancelled teaching and other professional engagements, and began experimenting with alterations to the oboe itself, pegging extensions to the keys which would assist my fingers in reaching them. To no avail. I visited dentists who proposed that the mercury contained in dental fillings could have affected my neurological system, and considered replacing all my fillings with new mercury-free units (I didn't). I tried medicine for Parkinson's disease, calculating that Focal Dystonia could be a result of some level of paralysis (it isn't). Another doctor injected the common dental anesthetic Novocain into my fingers, hoping to nullify any kind of localized agent which could be affecting the fingers' response (that didn't

work either). And of course I experimented with the common drug Botulinum Toxin - Botox - used by many Dystonia patients, though it had no effect due to my particular situation - Focal Dystonia affected only two of my fingers, and a potential leakage of Botox into the muscles affecting the entire hand could compromise the other, healthy three fingers. At some point I developed *double tendinitis*, feeling the pain of inflammation simultaneously on both ends of the *extensor* muscle: wrist/hand and elbow, as a result of that muscle encountering uncommon stress. Also, one of my neurologists suggested that a brain tumor could be pressing against neurons related to the oboe pathway. To my relief a Magnetic Resonance Imaging – MRI showed no such presence. This period was characterized by experimentation in all forms possible. As the saying goes, when all plausible solutions have been attempted, the only option left must be the correct one, so my strategy was to reach that point where every stone was turned and a solution would be revealed. At stake was my career, the sustenance of my family, the education of my children, and as I soon came to find out, my sense of self-worth and personal identity.

In November of 2001 came my worst fear. I was unable to play, at all. I sat in rehearsal, taking notes, watching my colleagues play, feeling useless. I requested a longer medical leave from the Chicago Symphony. I stopped playing altogether for two months, hoping to restart as a beginner, little by little, and establish a new finger technique that would prove successful, even if my neurologists warned me it wouldn't change the condition at all. They were right, it didn't. Of all the attempts to find physical solutions, one stood out as truly remarkable, and that was the deep tissue massage with therapist Sonia Broglin, similar to Rolfing and also referred to as “soft tissue” massage. It took two years of weekly or bi-weekly work, returning always as soon as I rested from the previous session. This work allowed more blood flow and cleaning into the muscles that I had been using to compensate for Dystonia, and thus - as the theory goes - also



permitted a better flow and usage of whatever neurological information passed through the nerves in that region.

During my last season with the Chicago Symphony I confronted tendinitis on a monthly basis, generally after about 3 or 4 weeks of playing. I derived from that experience that if I limit my playing to an average of one hour of playing per day I could allow the muscles and tendons to relax enough to avoid falling prey to tendinitis again. That limitation is hardly enough to maintain an orchestral position, and as I forced the muscles and tendons to meet orchestra demands I developed inflammations/tendinitis regularly and was forced to stop playing. I felt myself being a bad colleague to be so dependent on others to fill in for me at the last minute so many times, and being unable to predict when I would be available to provide adequate performance commensurate with the expectations laid on me or my position. Truth be told, the writing was on the wall, and I was no longer qualified to be sitting in the Chicago Symphony. I was disabled, handicapped, damaged goods, unable to perform my duties. Beaten by the one-hour-a-day limitation, relying on the words of neurologists regarding the incurability of Dystonia, and finding no solution after years of trial and error with alternative treatments, I decided it would be best if I accepted the loss and left the orchestra altogether. I cared too much for the high standards of performance and accountability in the Chicago Symphony to permit that I would become a focal point of lesser achievement, a weak link, so to speak. I also feared the domino effect my instability could create in my colleagues, as my insecurity would cause other musicians to lose concentration. In a tightly knit, high functioning orchestra, such small perceptions often make the difference between an excellent concert and a life-changing artistic event. In Chicago we pride ourselves in diving for the latter, as we should.

## **Orchestra Contracts are Unprepared for Focal Dystonia**

Departing from a major orchestra due to an illness should be less of a personal burden, after all such orchestras boast formidable contracts, with health insurance, disability and a host of benefits for departing musicians needing care. Not so with regards to Focal Dystonia. The insurance company of choice with the Chicago Symphony did not recognize Focal Dystonia as a disability. I was thus *denied* disability insurance and left the orchestra without any income whatsoever. This is an apparent flaw in the CSO Musicians' Contract, as it failed to properly protect its members as they undergo a career-based illness. I literally returned to live in a couch in my parent's living room. In fact, given the statistics of orchestra musicians acquiring Focal Dystonia, my suggestion to the CSO's musicians as well as to all other professional orchestras and Unions is to add the words "Focal Dystonia" and specific language to that effect on their disability insurance policies, so their insurers will not disregard the needs of one of their musicians again in the future. Musicians who acquire Focal Dystonia are disabled *as far as their continuing orchestra work is concerned*, even if they may still be able to play *something* or exert their playing capacity to *some extent*. This is particularly important because more often than not musicians have dedicated an entire life to playing their instruments, having no other training. We are entitled to a second chance, with our instrument at hand, trying and trying again until we hopefully succeed, without the suspicion that such trials are undeserving of disability insurance support. Understanding and making sense of this is up to the Insurance Companies, but leave no doubt that *Focal Dystonia is a disability capable of impeding the continuation of employment*, and *no* musician should be denied disability insurance as a result of this illness. Also, due to the emotional impact carried by any of a fair list of job-threatening and career-ending illnesses, musicians may incur depression and even life-ending thoughts as a result of their loss, and thus

be unable to devote time and energy to taking insurance companies to Court or sifting through hundreds of pages of insurance information looking for their rights. Orchestra committees and unions would serve their musicians better if they *each* assign a representative to accompany all critically ill colleagues through all their rights and benefits during their convalescence, where these protections are found in orchestra contracts, union guidelines or state and federal law.

It is wrong to minimize Focal Dystonia as a mere neurological condition. These medical "conditions" come with consequences that affect not only the muscles that we push hard to compensate for, but they also have a devastating effect on the psyche, emotional wellbeing, self-worth, self-esteem, and on the all-important *identity* of the patient. Focal Dystonia itself - that is, an interrupted neurological pathway somewhere in the brain - is of little conscious concern to me, when facing the myriad of *consequences* arising from it. These *consequences* to our emotional well-being cannot be easily discarded as being as bad or worse than the condition itself, because musicians learn from a young age to build a life around music and that instrument. Take the instrument away and their personal security and identity may collapse.

### **Family and Law on Focal Dystonia**

Focal Dystonia affects more than the actual person diagnosed with it. As can be expected, an illness capable of causing such disorientation for years on end prior to a diagnosis, and of such chaotic emotional, professional and financial roller-coaster afterwards is bound to affect those who live *with* the patient just as much as the patient. Sadly, it is not uncommon for people who suffer from major illnesses and disability to also encounter difficulties with partners who don't fully grasp or accept the seriousness of the health-related adjustments and sacrifices that need to be made to maintain a family structure together through these conditions. Many partners

become angry at their ill spouse as a diversion from their actual feelings towards the illness, which has no physical presence to receive such emotions. In November, 2001, a few days after I began my medical leave from the Chicago Symphony and roughly 6 months after my diagnosis I was served with divorce papers, ironically claiming all the consequences of the disease as an impediment for proper matrimonial continuation, such as my focus on my personal issues and the immense amount of time being devoted to finding a cure, plus the signs of depression which accompanied the entire process. So much for "in sickness and in health", one might think, but consider that the average spouse may have an even harder time understanding that which not even the patient could understand at the time. Add to that the idea of *identity*, the fact that it takes a lot of strength for a Focal Dystonia musician to *accept* their fate, the end of all they have worked for in their lives, many times since before middle school. In this scenario, denial is a friend, a momentary insane thought that helps keep ourselves focused on an elusive cure, if that even exists. I understand other musicians affected by Focal Dystonia also encountered changes in their relationships, which either ended or became stronger as the couple worked together (or not) to overcome the consequences of this condition and to the overall family stability.

The loss of family and the closeness of my children through an aggressive litigious process did not help my work against the consequences of Focal Dystonia. I was always - and still am - very close to my children, and the prospect of being taken away from regular involvement in their lives was devastating to me. The catastrophic nature of this family situation is a separate saga, but it intertwines with my Focal Dystonia issues enough to make me include it in this article as a consequence of the illness, not only in the arguments made in favor of the separation, but in the effects of such a monumental life change in a person already burdened with

an incurable illness. It also became clear how Focal Dystonia is such a mystery to legal authorities when dealing with loss of employment and disability.

As I searched for medical solutions, the divorce issue took proportions for which I could not have been prepared for. My doctors were barred from testifying on my behalf, and none of my medical information was introduced into Court hearings. I was levied support payments calculated on the basis of my *pre-disability income*, that is, it was as if I never acquired Focal Dystonia at all. I was found to be financially responsible for acquiring a disability, and granted no relief for continuous treatments and medical support whatsoever, even if I no longer had income to provide for my own support, let alone for others'. This conclusion is irresponsible and discriminatory, and reached absurd consequences for my children, ironically the ones who were supposed to be protected by a Family Court. The list of reprehensible actions taken against my children's best interests due directly or indirectly to my acquiring Focal Dystonia is shameful, and kept me returning to US Courts, at great personal expense, in the futile attempts to establish my civil rights as a person of handicap.



Figure 1: the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> fingers have curled and now clench into the palm of the hand.

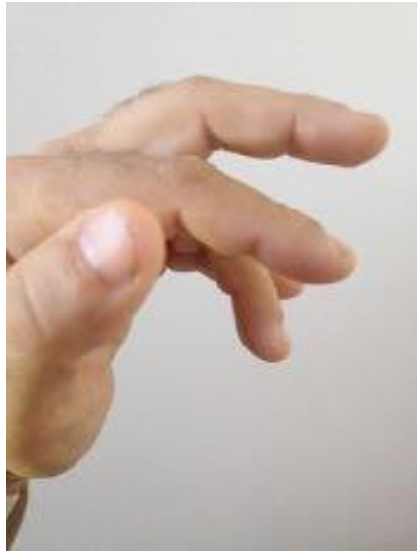


Figure 2: the “new” balance between the fingers positions the “G” finger lower than key level, and the “A” finger higher.

### **Corrosion from Within**

Depression is a common aggregate to Focal Dystonia. It can be argued that an extra artistic sensitivity leads us towards an artistic career, but in moments like this the sentiments are a self-aimed weapon, as the down feelings in many cases lead our colleagues to catastrophic personal decisions. I remember seeing in a website for musicians with Dystonia that "those considering suicide should contact a crisis center immediately".

Focal Dystonia takes away more than our playing. It also takes our dreams and life plans. Our emotional balance is shaken when our instrument and lifelong musical companion is taken away. Music performance saved my life before, and gave it meaning. I was almost expelled from school in third grade, but that soon led to my visit to a symphony orchestra concert where I heard the great oboist Lido Guarnieri play. I fell in love with the oboe, and my life changed. All my most important life moments were surrounded by great music and an oboe...but all of a sudden I

am being told I will not be able to do that anymore. I began to question the simplest actions in my life, for lack of reference.

Fighting the loss of my job and career, while simultaneously fighting the loss of my family proved too much to handle. People don't *choose* to become handicapped, and no disabled person should go through humiliations and oppression in order to remain close to my children. The trouble with discrimination is that it comes attached to preconceived notions about a person's positive contributions to others, or lack thereof. The emotional impact of both fronts proved unrealistic for me. I was unable to cope with either loss. Society does not consider it proper for a person to take one's own life or even consider such an option. That option, however, needs to be understood from the point of view of the person who finds him/ herself without a light at the end of the tunnel. Like some patients with Focal Dystonia, I too considered that option, for one simple reason: it would stop the pain. To my benefit, and that of my loved ones, a close friend happened to call me during my worst moment, during the process of writing my final letter explaining why I came to the conclusion that this was the best solution under the circumstances. A crisis center was called to save the day.

After leaving Chicago I spent months in a state of perplexity, unable to sleep more than two hours per night or take any action towards recovery. I would occasionally practice, but would be reminded a few days later that tendinitis was always a consequence of forcing my hand to do what it no longer could. For mere financial survival and thanks to friends willing to help, I participated in a few sporadic musical events, always with the façade of optimism hiding the chasm I felt inside. After all, a revelation of my true feelings at the time would hardly be a professional calling card, and would render my rare visits with my children completely obsolete.

## **Recovery**

*What did I have at my disposal which I could still count on?* I eventually began my recovery and gradually learned how to work within the limitations of the illness and optimize my playing. Eventually this effort led to an increase in the amount of playing I could do. I added conducting to my musical activities, as it provided a return to the stage and a challenging music making. But what Brazil really needed from my experience were more cultural institutions based on a win-win strategy, befitting students, professionals, patrons and public, opening a managerial point of view more common among American and European institutions. I also deeply missed my time in the Chicago Symphony and wished to implement in Brazil some of the principles I appreciated so much during the 25 years I lived in the United States.

In 2006 I created the Santa Catarina Music Festival - FEMUSC, where we established what is essentially an American-inspired institution with Latin-American spirit: a private Institute with a Board of Trustees, tuition-free and room-and-board provided for all students, with top-notch faculty members/friends from so many great orchestras and conservatories. We soon attracted a large legion of students and today, going into its 12th season, have served over 8000 of them, from 40 countries. FEMUSC is divided into 10 separate but simultaneous workshops, each catering to a different stage in a students' development, from a children's festival all the way to a Marlboro-inspired Professional Program, and each with a separate set of pre-requisites and admissions priorities. We offer over 200 public performances during the 2-week program, in 25 concert series in 7 cities, to over 60,000 people. It transformed the beach-flight, sleepy month of January of the industrial city of Jaraguá do Sul (population 130,000) into a bustling commerce town, creating 450 jobs, filling hotels, restaurants and shopping, and



moving the economy at approximately three times the amount of the festival's budget. A win-win situation, no doubt.

I also created PRIMA - Program of Social Inclusion through Music and the Arts, in one of Brazil's poorest states, Paraiba, with similarly poor ratings in crime, drugs, and social risk. It was a life-changing experience to see how such a "sistema"-inspired program works and evolves people and communities. The plan we implemented was to analyze orchestral playing from the point of view of citizenship, using the orchestra as an example of a well-balanced society, where music can demand from all musicians an embrace of tolerance, respect, teamwork, personal responsibility, discipline and other character premiums we would like to see in a new generation of residents in the communities served. PRIMA grew strong, reaching thousands of students during the four years I remained at its helm, in 11 music centers distributed through an entire state. I left PRIMA in order to return to Chicago.

While I am happy to continue playing, and overwhelmed by the exciting return to the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, I am also happy to have acquired skills, experiences and appreciation of other forms of musical engagement, namely management and social action. Also, I would not have made it through these difficulties without the close attention of a number of friends who were angels in my time of need. Fortunately for me, they are too numerous for me to mention here, but Charles Stegeman and Frances Debroff deserved a special place in my heart for their unfailing guidance and humanity. Above all, my thanks go to my wife Catalina Guevara for her unfailing love and support during the past 12 years, and to my children Stephan, Ani, Alexandre and Nina Aura for their patience as their father reorganized his life during a period when they needed a strength and security which at times was difficult to provide.

My advice to those who are confronting Focal Dystonia for the first time now, is to "take the curve" on the road, and accept it. The plans, dreams and expectations you had for the previous direction on the road are now lost, forever. Accept it. Open your hearts to the new challenges, which promise to be every bit as interesting as the older ones, if not more. It might just happen that by accepting the unacceptable you will place your mind at ease enough to find solutions you would never have considered had you maintained your mind set on your past. And it might just be that some of that past will return to you on a silver platter, as a new beginning.

Links of interest:

Musician's With Dystonia

<http://www.dystonia.org.uk/index.php/about-dystonia/types-ofdystonia/focal-hand-dystonia/musicians-dystonia-musicians-cramp>

Dystonia Medical Research Foundation

<https://www.dystonia-foundation.org/what-is-dystonia/forms-ofdystonia/musicians-dystonias>

Leon Fleischer interview, 2007

[http://www.nytimes.com/2007/06/12/arts/12iht-pianist.1.6104272.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2007/06/12/arts/12iht-pianist.1.6104272.html?_r=0)

Leon Fleischer interview, 2010

<http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/music/features/leon-fleischer-my-life-fell-apart-1984408.html>