

Preface

25 Great Clarinet Solos is a collection of some of the most renowned and significant clarinet solos and melodies ever recorded. The songs themselves are classics: famous, recognizable, and heard almost everywhere in the world. For the person who has always wanted to learn those famous clarinet melodies (“licks”), it’s all here!

Solos/songs were chosen using various criteria: popularity, acquirable publishing rights, musical content, familiarity, and inherent musicality. Some are harder than others, and some are short and simple. Extensive research was done to provide accurate information about the solos, songs, equipment used, recording, musicians, and players. (In some instances, that info was simply unavailable.)

A few solos are performed on bass clarinet. Since bass clarinet sounds an octave lower, playing the parts an octave lower on the B \flat clarinet will match the correct pitch. Certain solos contain some precarious high notes, so study proper high-note fingerings (included at the end of the book) and practice appropriate high-note exercises.

About the Audio

The accompanying audio tracks attempt to sound like the original recordings. The time code shown at the start of each solo transcription indicates the point where the solo begins on the original recording. There are two versions of each solo: 1) clarinet solo with accompaniment; 2) accompaniment only. This allows you to hear how the solo sounds, then to play it yourself with the accompaniment track. Though our goal was to replicate all solos and performances, there’s nothing like the real thing, so we encourage you to listen to the original recordings.

All music on the recordings is performed by:

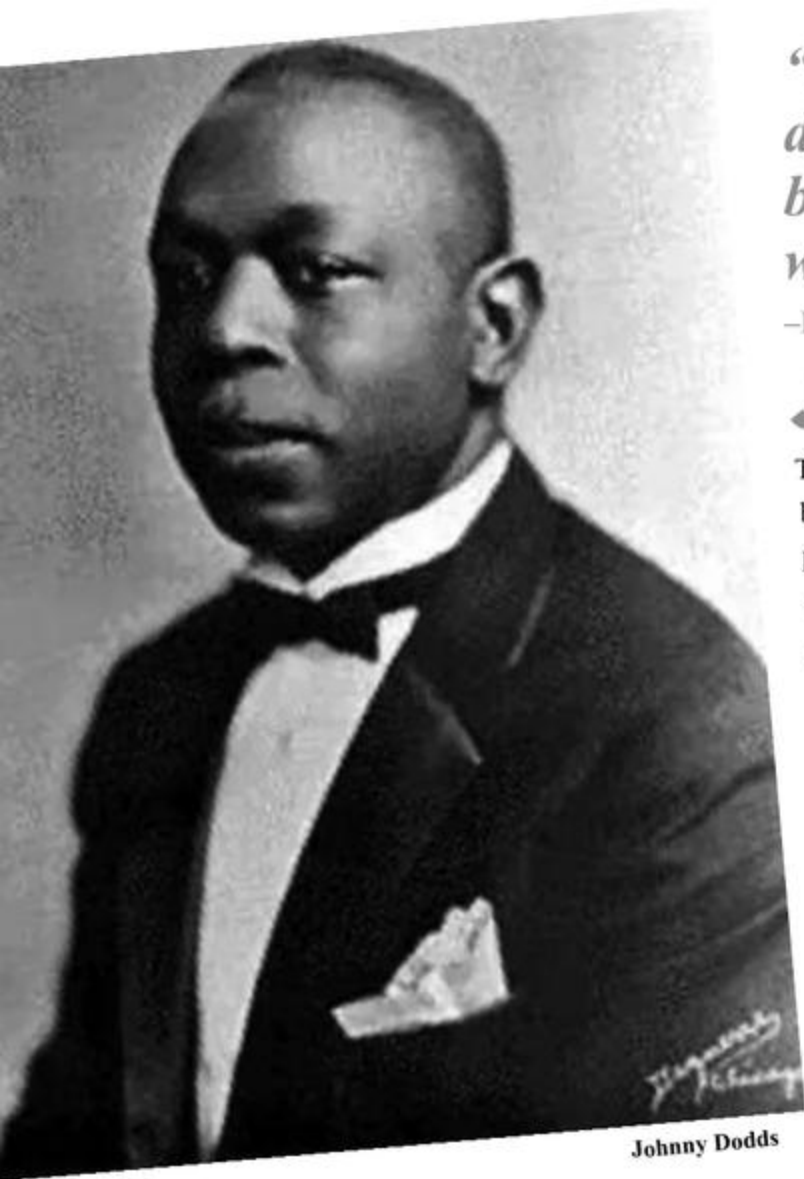
Eric J. Morones	clarinet, bass clarinet, saxophones, keyboards
Austin Byrd	piano
Lucky Diaz	guitar
Anders Swanson	bass
Brennan Murray	drums
Nathan Morones	trumpet

Orchestral arrangement of *Rhapsody in Blue* by Kyle Newmaster

Produced by Eric J. Morones

Recorded and Mixed by Nic Chaffee at Woodshed Studios, Long Beach, California

Thank you to Jeff Schroedl and Hal Leonard LLC, to the wonderful musicians on this project, and to all the amazing clarinetists who played these great solos that will last a lifetime!



Johnny Dodds

“It was my ambition to play as he did. I still think that if it had not been for Joe ‘King’ Oliver, jazz would not be what it is today.”

—Louis Armstrong

Johnny Dodds

The first solo of the bunch is proof that great performances will last a century!

Johnny Dodds was born on April 12, 1892 in Waveland, Mississippi. He received his first clarinet around age 16, with early jazz pioneer Sidney Bechet as his first influence. Dodds eventually moved to New Orleans where he practiced during his job lunch breaks.

Like many New Orleans musicians at the time, he sharpened his music reading and playing skills working in dance bands aboard Mississippi riverboats. In 1920, he relocated to Chicago, where he replaced Jimmie Noone in the powerful and popular King Oliver’s Creole Jazz Band. A young Louis Armstrong, who was also in Oliver’s band, later invited Dodds to play an important role in his first recordings—as a leader with legendary Hot Seven. “Canal Street Blues” and “Potato Head Blues” are just a few examples of famous performances from the band.

In total, Dodds eventually played on nearly 220 recordings with various bands and orchestras, including Kid Ory’s Creole Orchestra, Papa Celestin’s Original Tuxedo Band, Jelly Roll

Morton’s Red Hot Peppers, and his own Johnny Dodds and his Chicago Boys’ Orchestra. His unique clarinet tone was known for its wide vibrato, strong attacks, deep blues inflections and roots, and flowing diatonic melodies.

Dodds died of a heart attack on August 8, 1940 in Chicago.

King Oliver



King Oliver

Joseph Nathan “King” Oliver was born on December 19, 1881 in Aben, Louisiana. As a trumpet player and bandleader, he was one of the most important early figures in jazz. Oliver began playing cornet as a child in a neighborhood brass band. He would later become the teacher of the young Louis Armstrong. As a bandleader and composer, he wrote many classic popular jazz hits,



including "Dippermouth Blues," "Sweet Like This," "Doctor Jazz," and "Canal Street Blues." Oliver became famous for using mutes, derbies, bottles, and cups to alter the sound of his cornet. By 1922, he was considered the "King of Jazz," leading the legendary King Oliver and His Creole Jazz Band.

Oliver died in Savannah, Georgia on April 10, 1938.

How to Play It

"Canal Street Blues" is credited to both Oliver and Lil Hardin Armstrong, Louis

Armstrong's second wife. It was the second title from King Oliver's Creole Jazz Band's first recording session, held on April 5, 1923 in Richmond, Indiana.

To play it, you will have to use note bends or scoops, performed by dropping your jaw to lower the pitch, and then back up while still maintaining the note. A wide and shaky vibrato (a style of the 1920s) is played on all long, sustained notes. Play with an open "oh" embouchure to give you a wider, open-sounding Dodds tone! Dodds used a Selmer Albert-System clarinet, which allowed greater flexibility in his sound and made it easier to bend notes and create smears. Some higher notes, including the high-range G, are

required in measures 13-14. Use straight-eighth notes rather than the usual swing-eighth notes.

Vital Stats

Clarinet player: Johnny Dodds

Song: "Canal Street Blues"

Album: *King Oliver's Creole Jazz Band*

Age at time of recording: 41

Clarinet used: Selmer Albert-System

Mouthpiece: unknown

1:21
Fast (♩ = 180) (♩♩ = ♩♩♩)

Chords: G7, C, G, D, G, C, G

Measures: 1-4, 5-8, 9-12, 13-16, 17-20, 21-24

Words and Music by Joe Oliver
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Rhapsody in Blue 1924

Ross Gorman



Photo courtesy Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division

Ross Gorman

This composition puts the “classic” in classical! One of 20th-century music’s most famous pieces just happens to feature a famous clarinet intro—that was made purely by accident!

Ross Gorman was born on November 18, 1890 in Patterson, New Jersey. He studied music with his musician father, John R. Gorman, appearing with him as part of the vaudeville act The Kiltie Trio. In 1919, Gorman joined Harry Yerkes’ Band, recording several albums with Columbia Records. Forming his own band, Novelty Syncopators, they recorded many novelty songs, the

most famous of which was “Barkin’ Dog Blues;” it featured the clarinet imitating a barking dog.

The well-known band leader Paul Whiteman hired Gorman for his orchestra in late October 1920, where he replaced Gus Mueller; he stayed with the band for five years. It was during this period that he was featured in the premiere performance of George Gershwin’s *Rhapsody in Blue* (February 12, 1924). He eventually formed his own orchestra, appearing in *The Earl Carroll’s Vanities 1925 Revue*. Throughout the 1930s, he performed a lot of radio and studio work and was a staff musician for NBC, recording with many bands, including the boy-wonder trumpet player B. A. Rolfe.

Ross Gorman died on February 27, 1953.



George Gershwin

Jacob Bruskin Gershowitz (George Gershwin) was born on September 26, 1898 in Brooklyn, New York. When the family bought an upright piano in 1910, he quickly learned to play it; by age 15, he was writing his own songs. His first published song came out at age 17. He and his wordsmith brother Ira wrote several successful musicals, including the hits *Oh, Lady Be Good*, *Funny Face*, and *Strike Up the Band*. Gershwin’s many contributions to the Great American Songbook include “Fascinating Rhythm,” “I Got Rhythm,” “Summertime,” and “A Foggy Day” (see page 27). Among his other compositions are the opera *Porgy and Bess*, the orchestral tone poem *An American in Paris*, and, of course, *Rhapsody in Blue*.

Gershwin died of a brain tumor on July 11, 1937 in Hollywood, California.

How to Play It

In 1924, Paul Whiteman (1890-1967), the country’s best-known band leader from the 1920s to the 1940s, tapped Gershwin to write a “jazz concerto” for a concert he planned to present at New York’s Aeolian Hall. (Whiteman had been impressed by his earlier collaboration with Gershwin on *George White’s Scandals of 1922*.) Entitled “An Experiment in Modern Music,” it promised to broaden concertgoers’ perceptions of what serious American music could sound like.



George Gershwin

“It was on the train, with its steely rhythms, its rattle-ty bang, that is so often so stimulating to a composer. I frequently hear music in the very heart of the noise. And there I suddenly heard, and even saw on paper, the complete construction of the Rhapsody, from beginning to end.”

—George Gershwin on *Rhapsody in Blue*

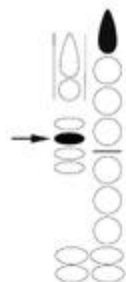
The famous opening clarinet solo came during a rehearsal when, as a joke, Gorman played the notes with a noticeable, over-exaggerated glissando. Gershwin liked it so much that he asked him to perform the opening measures that way at the concert and to add “as much wail as possible.” Originally, it was written as a simple scale run up to the top C.

To play this famous glissando effect, slide your fingers through the fingered notes, while slowly dropping your embouchure. Merge the pitches until

it’s a slurred, bent effect between all the notes from low G to high C.

Measure 2 has a turn that can use the side C trill fingering to play between the B \flat and C. In Measure 6, use the side trill fingering for B \flat between the A and B \flat . Measure 10

Trill B \flat
“Rhapsody in Blue”



has a high F. Make sure the triplets are clean and even. Play all articulations as notated, with a “classical” tone.

Vital Stats

Clarinet player: Ross Gorman

Song: *Rhapsody in Blue*

Album: Paul Whiteman and His Orchestra, *Rhapsody in Blue*, original 1924 acoustic 78 RPM

Age at time of recording: 34

Clarinet used: unknown

Mouthpiece: unknown



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By George Gershwin
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Barney Bigard

“The Mooch” features unusual blends of melodies and rhythms—as well as the unique instrumental colors of the players—all of which combine to make the special sound that was Duke Ellington.

Albany Leon “Barney” Bigard was born on March 3, 1906 in New Orleans. He took clarinet lessons with the famous Lorenzo Tio at an early age. In the early 1920s, he moved to Chicago, where he worked with King Oliver (see page 4)

between 1925-27. Also known as a great tenor sax player, Bigard became known for his low-register, woody clarinet tone that people associate with New Orleans-style clarinetists. In 1927, Bigard joined Duke Ellington’s Orchestra and played with them until 1942. With Ellington, he was a featured clarinet soloist and co-composed the jazz standard “Mood Indigo.” Along with Ellington, he made famous recordings with trombonist Kid Ory, Louis Armstrong, Nat King Cole,

Ella Fitzgerald, and groups under his own direction.

After leaving Duke’s band, Bigard moved to Los Angeles, where he did soundtrack work for many Hollywood film studios; he even had an onscreen featured role in *New Orleans* (1947). Throughout the 1960s, he led his own sextet, including tours of Europe and Africa for the State Department.

Bigard died on June 27, 1980, in Culver City, California. His autobiography, *With Louis and The Duke*, was released posthumously in 1988.



Photo courtesy William P. Gottlieb/Ira and Leonore S. Gershwin Fund Collection, Music Division, Library of Congress

Barney Bigard

Duke Ellington



Duke Ellington

Edward Kennedy “Duke” Ellington was born on April 29, 1899 in Washington, D.C. He began studying piano at age seven, writing his first composition, “Soda Fountain Rag,” at age 15.

He studied art during his high-school years, almost choosing it as a career. Inspired by several ragtime performers, at age 17 he began to perform professionally as a musician. During the 1920s, Ellington formed his first sextets—and soon, larger bands—that would become the world-famous Duke Ellington Orchestra. As a legendary pianist and bandleader whose career spanned over 50 years, he composed thousands of scores, including famous songs like “Sophisticated Lady,” “Satin Doll,” “Don’t Get Around Much Any More,” “Prelude to a Kiss,” “Solitude,” “I Let a Song Go Out of My Heart,” and “Take the ‘A’ Train” (co-written with Billy Strayhorn).

Ellington died of cancer on May 24, 1974 in New York City.

“There was something different about him. Everybody in the band knew they were working with a genius.”

–Barney Bigard on Duke Ellington

How to Play It

Written by Ellington and Irving Mills in 1928, “The Mooche” comes from Ellington’s “jungle style,” African-themed music period, echoing other songs like “East St. Louis Toodle-oo” and “Black and Tan Fantasy.” The name, as Ellington explained, referred to “a certain lazy gait peculiar to some of the folk of Harlem.”

There are two solos here:

Solo 1 is the famous clarinet melody of the song, played in harmony with other clarinets. (The lead part is omitted for the backing track). Use a very wide vibrato and employ an open “oh” embouchure position, with an open throat.

Solo 2 is Bigard’s low-register “woody” solo. Try to overblow the clarinet, but avoid squawking or cracking any notes. Again, use lots of wide vibrato. Most of the lines are slurred, which should be helpful in playing.

Vital Stats

Clarinet player: Barney Bigard

Song: “The Mooche”

Album: unknown

Age at time of recording: 22

Clarinet used: Albert system

Mouthpiece: unknown

0:09
Slow drag (♩ = 124) (♩ = $\overset{\frown}{\underset{\frown}{\text{3}}}$)

Dm Db

5 Ebdim Dm

9 Bb Dm

13 Bb Db C+

The musical score is written in 4/4 time and consists of four staves. The first staff starts with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat (Bb). It features a melody with a wide vibrato and a slur over the first four measures. The second staff continues the melody with a slur over the next four measures. The third staff shows a change in the bass line with a slur over the first four measures. The fourth staff continues the bass line with a slur over the next four measures. Chord symbols are placed above the staves to indicate the harmonic structure.

By Duke Ellington and Irving Mills

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