



ACADEMY OF MUSIC AND DRAMA

My personal investigation into the Dutch oboe school

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Independent Project (Degree Project), 30 HEC, Master of Fine Arts in symphonic orchestra performance

Spring, 2018

Independent Project (Degree Project), 30 higher education credits

Master of Fine Arts in symphonic orchestra performance

Academy of Music and Drama, University of Gothenburg

Spring 2018

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ABSTRACT

Key words: Dutch oboe school, Jaap Stotijn, oboe reeds, musical background

As a Dutch oboist, I investigated and explored the different aspects of the Dutch oboe school and related them to my own playing. I interviewed two senior Dutch oboists and read about the Dutch school in the literature. I listened to recordings of one representative of the French and one of the German oboe school and compared those to a recording of Jaap Stotijn, the founder of the Dutch oboe school. I also played a piece dedicated to Jaap Stotijn and experimented with making reeds similar to Jaap Stotijn's reeds. The biggest differences between the reed of Jaap Stotijn and my own were the length of the staple and thickness of the cane. This project gave me a deeper understanding of the Dutch oboe school and how I relate to it. I could see what felt most natural to me and use it to connect to my musical background.

Table of Content

1. Introduction	4
1.1. Background	4
1.2. Purpose and Aim	4
1.3. Method	4
1.4. Material	5
1.5. Previous studies on the Dutch oboe school	6
2. What characterizes the Dutch oboe school?	6
2.1. Reeds	8
2.2. Implementing singing techniques	8
2.3. Jaap Stotijn's playing compared to the playing of a German and a French oboist	9
2.4. Octave key	10
2.5. The influence of Jaap Stotijn on other players	11
3. My reed experiment	12
3.1. How to make a reed: an overview	12
3.2. Jaap Stotijn's reed	14
3.3. My experiment	17
3.4. What can I take from this experiment?	20
4. A change to the octave key system	21
5. Jaap Stotijn as an inspiration to Dutch composers	22
6. Conclusion	28
Appendix 1: List of compositions written for or dedicated to Jaap Stotijn	29
Bibliography	30
Discography	31
List of illustrations	32

List of media files:

- Audio 1: Excerpt from Brahms' *Violin Concerto*, 2nd movement performed on my ordinary reed
- Audio 2: Excerpt from *La Scala di Seta* by Rossini performed on my ordinary reed
- Audio 3: Excerpt from Brahms' *Violin Concerto*, 2nd movement performed on reed version 1
- Audio 4: Excerpt from *La Scala di Seta* by Rossini performed on reed version 1
- Audio 5: Excerpt from Brahms' *Violin Concerto*, 2nd movement performed on reed version 2
- Audio 6: Excerpt from *La Scala di Seta* by Rossini performed on reed version 2
- Audio 7: Excerpt from *Sonatine* by Sigtenhorst Meyer, *Moderato*
- Audio 8: Excerpt from *Sonatine* by Sigtenhorst Meyer, *Moderato*
- Audio 9: Excerpt from *Sonatine* by Sigtenhorst Meyer, *Tranquillo*
- Audio 10: Excerpt from *Sonatine* by Sigtenhorst Meyer, *Tranquillo*
- Audio 11: Excerpt from *Sonatine* by Sigtenhorst Meyer, *Ritornello*
- Audio 12: Excerpt from *Sonatine* by Sigtenhorst Meyer, *Ritornello*
- Audio 13: Sigtenhorst Meyer, *Sonatine* op. 34, *Moderato*
- Audio 14: Sigtenhorst Meyer, *Sonatine* op. 34, *Tranquillo*
- Audio 15: Sigtenhorst Meyer, *Sonatine* op. 34, *Ritornello*

- Video 1: The semi-automatic octave system on Oboe d'Amore made by Lorée
- Video 2: The automatic octave system on Cor Anglais made by Lorée
- Video 3: The automatic octave system plus the extra key on Oboe made by Lorée

1. Introduction

1.1. Background

A few years ago, when I still studied in Utrecht, the Netherlands, I asked a student from Iceland why he wanted to study in the Netherlands. His answer was that he liked the Dutch way of playing the oboe. Before, I had never realised there was a certain Dutch oboe school, but since then I have been wondering whether I play in the Dutch style.

I am a Dutch oboist and until a few years ago I had lived my whole life in the Netherlands. Before I moved to Gothenburg I studied in Utrecht with Ernest Rombout and in Bremen with Christian Hommel. Both these oboists studied in Freiburg with Heinz Holliger, who is a Swiss oboist, so during my professional education I was not schooled in the Dutch school. But before I started at music college I might have been trained in the Dutch way of playing. Rienus Oude Kempers was my teacher before I started my studies in Utrecht. His teacher was Hans Sonneveld, who had a few lessons with Jaap Stotijn, but never really studied with him. There might have been some influence from the Dutch school there, but I cannot say there is a very clear lineage from Jaap Stotijn to me. More recently I have been thinking that my way of playing is maybe more Dutch than I knew before. Only a few months before I wrote this thesis I participated in an audition for a Dutch orchestra. And in this audition I advanced further than I ever had before. This left me with the question of whether my style of playing actually fits best or is most liked in a Dutch orchestra.

I am interested in this subject because I want to know more about where I come from musically. But this thesis is also aimed at other oboists who might have heard of the Dutch oboe school and want to learn more about it, or at musicians in general who are interested in Dutch music and musicians from the Netherlands.

1.2. Purpose and Aim

In this project I have investigated and explored the different aspects of the Dutch oboe school and related them to my own playing. I also have reflected on how the Dutch way of playing the oboe has influenced me. I have worked on aspects of this school of playing to see if they could improve my playing. My goal was to get an overall view of this important aspect of my musical background.

One aim was to find out more about the Dutch Oboe school. What makes the Dutch oboe school different from other European oboe schools? To do that it was necessary to know more about Jaap Stotijn, who is generally seen as the founder of the Dutch oboe school. What did he change in his way of playing that made him different from other oboists of his time? What was his influence on the music of his time? For an oboist, reeds are crucial and I know that the reeds I make are different from the reeds Jaap Stotijn used. But could I learn anything from his reeds and improve my own reed making? Finally, I found answers to questions I have had since I met the Icelandic oboist I mentioned earlier. Have I been influenced by the Dutch oboe school, although I didn't study with a teacher who played according to the Dutch school? And are there any characteristics of the Dutch school that could help me to find my own sound? What does it mean to be a Dutch oboist?

1.3. Method

I interviewed two oboists who knew Jaap Stotijn personally: Hans Sonneveld and Rykle van der Heide. Both are Dutch and had lessons with Jaap Stotijn. Sonneveld had a few private lessons with Jaap Stotijn, while Van der Heide had his conservatory education with Jaap Stotijn. Van der Heide is also well known among oboists in the Netherlands as an oboe mechanic. Until a few years ago, when he retired, he owned *Hobo-atelier van der Heide* in Haarlem. I got in touch with Sonneveld via my former teacher Rienus Oude Kempers, who gave me Sonneveld's contact information. For Van der Heide, I contacted the people who took over his company and they were kind enough to give me his

phone number. Both Sonneveld and Van der Heide agreed to be interviewed, and welcomed me to their homes, where we had nice and comfortable chats. I recorded the interviews with my phone and made some additional notes. Later I transcribed the interviews and asked for their permission to use information from the interviews in this thesis.

I listened to three recordings of Jaap Stotijn and compared them with recordings of oboists of the two other important European oboe schools, the French and the German schools. The most important recording of Jaap Stotijn I listened to was his recording of Mozart's *Oboe Concerto*,¹ because I wanted to see if I could learn anything from it. I could have imitated his recording to get a better understanding of Jaap Stotijn's playing, but I decided that his way of playing the concerto would not improve my own interpretation. To get an idea of the style of playing and to compare it to the other European oboe schools it was enough to just listen to the recording.

I looked into the repertoire written for Jaap Stotijn and prepared one of the pieces written for him by Bernhard van den Sigtenhorst Meyer. I wanted to get a stronger feeling for the style of music written for Jaap Stotijn. I also tried out Jaap Stotijn's way of reed making and reflected on it. I experimented with reeds that I made in his style. By evaluating the experiment, I could choose aspects of the Dutch school's reed to improve my own reeds.

1.4. Material

Jaap Stotijn wrote two books himself. The first one is a book on how to make reeds, *De kunst van het maken van hobarieten*.² His second book was published five years after his death. It is a compilation of stories he told on the Dutch radio. The stories were compiled when he was still alive, but unfortunately Jaap Stotijn died before the book could be published. Five years later Mrs. Van Alphen from Residentie Orkest The Hague, Louis de Ruyter and Martin Zagzwijs collected all the needed illustrations and published the book, *Even uitblazen*.³

Jaap Stotijn also edited two books of etudes. The etude books already existed, but he made changes to them or added more exercises. These books were *Praktische Elementarschule für Oboe* by G. Hinke and *28 Etudes pour Hautbois* by Carl Besozzi. I decided not to discuss these in my thesis, because the changes made were very small and not relevant to this thesis.

A number of musical pieces were dedicated to Jaap Stotijn. A list of these pieces is found in Appendix 1.

Both Van der Heide and Sonneveld were in the possession of reeds made by Jaap Stotijn. During the interviews, I took a good look at those reeds. Sonneveld later sent me the measurements of the reeds in his possession.

Jaap Stotijn made a total of five recordings that were published by a label. The recordings of Mozart's *Oboe Concerto* and *Oboe Quartet* were made very late in his career.⁴ In *Even Uitblazen* he tells us a

¹ Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, *Concerto for Oboe and Orchestra in C major*, KV314, with Jaap Stotijn (oboe) and the Wiener Symphoniker, conducted by Wilhelm Loibner, recorded May 1956, Philips 462 552-2, September 1998, CD.

² Jaap Stotijn, *De Kunst van het maken van Hobarieten* (Wormerveer: Molenaar's Muziekcentrale nv, 1967).

³ Jaap Stotijn. *Even Uitblazen* (Nieuwkoop and Den Haag: Uitgeverij Heuff and Albersen en Co., 1975).

⁴ Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, *Concerto for Oboe and Orchestra in C major*, KV314, with Jaap Stotijn (oboe) and the Wiener Symphoniker, conducted by Wilhelm Loibner, recorded May 1956, Philips 462 552-2, September 1998, CD.

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, *Quartet for oboe, violin, viola and cello*, KV370, with Jaap Stotijn (oboe), Nap de Klijn (violin), Paul Godwin (viola), Carel van Leeuwen Boomkamp (cello), recorded 1956, Philips 05379, LP.

nice anecdote on how those recordings came to be.⁵ Jaap Stotijn's first recording and the only one for a long time was the recording he made together with his wife Truitje Molenaar of the *Liederen van de Nijl* by Sigtenhorst Meyer.⁶ They only recorded two of the three songs, because there was not enough space on the record for the third song. Unfortunately, I was not able to find anything about the recording itself. The only reason I know this recording must have existed is that Jaap Stotijn mentioned it in *Even Uitblazen*.⁷ After Jaap Stotijn's death another two recordings were published on one record. They came from the archives of the Dutch radio.⁸ The record contains a recording of Alexander Voormolen's *Concerto for oboe and orchestra* played by Jaap Stotijn and *Residentie Orkest of The Hague* and a recording of Voormolen's *Concerto for two oboes and orchestra* played by Jaap and Haakon Stotijn accompanied by the *Radio Filharmonisch Orkest*.⁹ By listening to these recordings I was able to get an idea of Jaap Stotijn's sound and compare it to the sound of his contemporaries from France and Germany. Unfortunately, making recordings was not common in the beginning of the 20th century. Finding recordings of contemporaries of Jaap Stotijn proved very difficult and I had to use recordings made by oboists slightly younger than Jaap Stotijn.

1.5. Previous studies on the Dutch oboe school

The Dutch oboist Pauline Oostenrijk is currently working on a book about Jaap Stotijn.¹⁰ But as it is not yet published, I could not get access to it. In *The Oboe* by Geoffrey Burgess and Bruce Haynes there is a paragraph about the Dutch oboe school.¹¹ Likewise, there is a paragraph about the Dutch oboe school in *Oboe Reed Styles: Theory and Practice* by David A. Ledet.¹² A.W.J. de Jonge wrote a mini-biography about Jaap Stotijn in *Biografisch Woordenboek van Nederland 1880-2000*.¹³

2. What characterizes the Dutch oboe school?

The Dutch oboe school is generally seen as being founded by the Dutch oboist Jaap Stotijn. He was famous for his penetrating, singing and light vibrating sound. The Dutch oboe school is in the Netherlands also known as the Stotijn school or the Hague school.¹⁴

Jaap Stotijn was born in 1891 in The Hague into a very musical family. When he was thirteen years old he started his education with Dirk van Emmerik at the *Koninklijke muziekschool*, later *Koninklijk Conservatorium voor Muziek*, in The Hague. In 1907 he joined his teacher in the *Residentie Orkest of The Hague* as a second oboist. When his teacher emigrated to the USA in 1919 Jaap Stotijn took over

⁵ Stotijn, *Even Uitblazen*, 58.

⁶ Bernhard van den Sigtenhorst Meyer, *Liederen van de Nijl*, op. 44, for soprano and oboe or flute (Amsterdam: G.Alsbach & co., 1927).

⁷ Stotijn, *Even Uitblazen*, 56.

⁸ *Ibid*, 62.

⁹ Alexander Voormolen, *Concert voor Hobo en Orkest*, with Jaap Stotijn (oboe) and Residentie Orkest, conducted by Willem van Otterloo, recorded 1951, Basart Europhon INTPS 59038, published after 1970, LP. Alexander Voormolen, *Concert voor 2 Hobo's en Orkest*, with Jaap Stotijn, Haakon Stotijn (oboe) and Radio Filharmonisch Orkest, conducted by Jean Fournet, recorded 1961, Basart Europhon INTPS 59038, published after 1970, LP.

¹⁰ Interview with Rykle van der Heide, July 31, 2017.

¹¹ Geoffrey Burgess and Bruce Haynes, *Yale Musical Instrument Series: The Oboe* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2004), 205.

¹² David A. Ledet, *Oboe Reed Styles: Theory and Practice*. (2008 edition, Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1981), 101-104, 171.

¹³ A.W.J. de Jonge, "Stotijn, Jaap Hendrik (1891-1970)", in *Biografisch Woordenboek van Nederland 1880-2000* 6. Huygens ING, 2002-. Last modified November 12, 2013, <http://resources.huygens.knaw.nl/bwn1880-2000/lemmata/bwn6/stotijn>.

¹⁴ *Ibid*.

his position as first oboist, as well as his teaching position at the *Koninklijk Conservatorium voor Muziek*. He held both positions until his retirement in 1956. He and his wife, the singer Geertruida 'Truitje' Molenaar, had two children. His daughter Ellen played the harp and son Haakon also played the oboe. Jaap Stotijn died in 1970 at the age of 78.¹⁵

In the beginning of the 20th century there were several national schools of playing the oboe. The two most influential of these were the French and the German schools. The Dutch school is seen as a combination of the German and the French schools.¹⁶ Stylistically, the Germans and the French are at opposite extremes. I would describe French music of the 19th century as very delicate and virtuosic, in contrast to German music, which I would describe as robust. The style of oboe playing corresponds to my description of the style of music in both countries.

Burgess says the Germans preferred a fuller, darker tone at the end of the Romantic era over the brighter and more flexible sound concept in France.¹⁷ He quotes musicologist Robert Donington on the fundamental differences:

There has been a remarkable French tradition favouring all that is most poetical and exquisite in the oboe's potentialities. Expressiveness is at a premium; robustness has a little suffered; the sound itself could be called relatively pinched or nasal. The German and above all the Viennese tradition has remained more faithful to the original qualities: warmer, less cutting, even a little veiled by comparison with the silvery French sounds.¹⁸

Saying the Dutch oboe school is in between the German and French oboe school is too vague for me. As they are extremes there is a lot of space between the German and French style of playing. I would like to know where to place the different aspects of the Dutch school on the scale from French to German style.

The development of the instrument also differed between Germany and France. At the beginning of the 19th century the French were behind the Germans in the development of the instrument. The French oboe had fewer keys and the intonation was less reliable than that of the German oboe.¹⁹ But during the 19th century Guillaum Triébert and his sons developed six different systems which slowly took over the oboe world in Europe. The last system, Triébert no.6, is now known as the conservatoire system and is now used on oboes all over the world.²⁰ The German oboe manufacturers were only influenced by the French developments to a small extent.²¹ They kept on making instruments in their own style and made their own improvements. Not until the beginning of the 20th century did the Germans gradually begin to use the French oboe.²² Visually the biggest difference between the French and German oboe was the key system, but soundwise the most important factor was the different bore. The bore is the hollow space inside the oboe and it has a great influence on the sound of the instrument. The bore of the German oboe was larger, giving the German oboe a darker sound than the French.

¹⁵ A.W.J. de Jonge, "Stotijn, Jaap Hendrik (1891-1970)", in *Biografisch Woordenboek van Nederland 1880-2000* 6. Huygens ING, 2002-. Last modified November 12, 2013, <http://resources.huygens.knaw.nl/bwn1880-2000/lemmata/bwn6/stotijn>.

¹⁶ Burgess and Haynes, *The Oboe*, 205.

¹⁷ *Ibid*, 175.

¹⁸ Robert Donington, *Music and its instruments* (London: Methuen, 1982), 138, quoted in Burgess and Haynes, *The Oboe*, 204.

¹⁹ Burgess and Haynes, *The Oboe*, 133.

²⁰ *Ibid*, 171.

²¹ *Ibid*, 150.

²² *Ibid*, 176.

The Dutch music scene was traditionally mostly influenced by the Germans. Many famous German and Austrian composers like Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Johannes Brahms and Gustav Mahler visited the Netherlands and played concerts in the Dutch concert halls. The Dutch oboists were also influenced by those German sounds. Many Dutch oboists still played German oboes at the end of the 19th century,²³ but when they saw the possibilities the French instrument offered, they switched to the French oboe. Even with the French oboe, they kept using German-style reeds, which are wider than French reeds, and their concept of an ideal sound was German. Combining German reeds with the French instruments resulted in more flexibility and lightness.²⁴

2.1. Reeds

According to Sonneveld the most defining ingredient of Jaap Stotijn's playing was his reed. Jaap Stotijn developed a reed that was really wide and thick. To counteract the lower intonation of a wide and thick reed he shortened the staple drastically. At the time Sonneveld met Jaap Stotijn, Stotijn played on staples with a length of 39 mm.²⁵ Today a Dutch reed has a 42 mm staple. In the rest of the world most oboists use staples that are 45 to 47 mm long. The American oboist David Ledet interviewed Jaap Stotijn about his reeds in 1959. Jaap Stotijn made the following remark:

I make reeds somewhat wider and thicker than French reeds. As a consequence, I make the tubes and both sides somewhat shorter – about 2 mm on the upper side and about 5 mm on the bottom. Therefore, the diapason is higher and I do not have to strain, but can blow with a loose embouchure. The shorter tube makes the tone clearer, and because of the wider and thicker reed, I get more "trilling" and more ease in high and low tones. Because the reed is thicker, I also can put on the little copper band, which is impossible for the French oboists. Consequently, the sides cannot slip over each other; when the reed is opened up, I can close it more with the copper band, and conversely, when the reed is closed I can *open* it up again. Another important matter is that I never have to strain because the little band is doing part of the work that otherwise would be performed by the lips.²⁶

As a general physics law, an instrument sounds higher if the instrument is shorter. By shortening the staple Jaap Stotijn shortened the instrument as a whole and he did not have to tighten his lips as much to make his oboe sound higher and in tune. Ledet writes that the reeds had little resistance and spoke under small air pressure.²⁷

2.2. Implementing singing techniques

Another characteristic of the Stotijn style of playing is the way he implemented singing techniques in his oboe playing. Sonneveld remembered that he learned to play the oboe without any knowledge of breath support. He would just blow and if he had to play louder he would blow more. Jaap Stotijn taught himself how to use breath control by taking singing lessons and implemented this breathing technique in his oboe playing. It is hard to say whether he was the first oboist in the world to use breath support, especially bearing in mind that the French always were technically far ahead of the Dutch. But Jaap Stotijn was the first one in the Netherlands who is known to have done that.²⁸ According to Sonneveld, Jaap Stotijn was encouraged by his teacher Dirk van Emmerik to take singing lessons, Van Emmerik pointed out to him the similarities between playing the oboe and singing. Jaap Stotijn saw the two blades of the reed as vocal cords and used the pharynx, nasal cavity

²³ Burgess and Haynes, *The Oboe*, 174.

²⁴ "Interview with Han de Vries," accessed May 15, 2017, <http://www.oboeclassics.com/HandeVriesInt.htm>.

²⁵ Interview with Hans Sonneveld, January 9, 2017.

²⁶ Ledet, *Oboe Reed Styles: Theory and Practice*, 103.

²⁷ *Ibid*, 171.

²⁸ Interview with Hans Sonneveld.

and the cavity of the mouth for the resonance.²⁹ Listening to the recording of the Mozart concerto Jaap Stotijn made with the *Wiener Symfoniker* in May 1956 I would say I can definitely hear the singing approach.³⁰

The use of breath support is known to me. And it was taught to me from almost the beginning. I do not think that any professional oboist in the Netherlands will still play in the 'just-blow'-style. Now it is common to play with breath support. It is not a characteristic of the Dutch school anymore, but rather the international norm. The fact that I am using breath support is not something that I can tie back to the Dutch oboe school. After asking my fellow students for the way they were taught breath support I came to the conclusion that the approach on how to teach breath support depends more on the preferences of the teacher than on the country where one lives.

One characteristic of the Dutch school that I recognise in my playing is the use of my body for resonance. I remember a teacher telling me to think of a hot potato in the back of my throat to open up the mouth cavity for resonance. I had to imagine my whole body as a resonance chamber. Whenever I find my sound is tight, I think of opening my body and sending out my sound all around me. I was never encouraged to take singing lessons, but I recognise certain techniques that were used in my lessons that our choir conductor later told us about in the choir at the conservatory, for example approaching the high notes from above. In my own oboe playing I follow the same principle and try not to squeeze out a high note, but I open it as much as possible by coming down to it.

2.3. Jaap Stotijn's playing compared to the playing of a German and a French oboist

I compared Jaap Stotijn's recordings with recordings of the oboists Helmut Winschermann (1920-) and Pierre Pierlot (1921-2007). Both are about thirty years younger than Jaap Stotijn. They belong more to the generation of Jaap Stotijn's son Haakon, but they are good representatives of the way they played in Germany and France respectively. They both had a big influence on the oboists in their countries. Winschermann was the founder of the *Deutsche Bachsolisten* and was heard by many oboists. Pierlot was the main oboe teacher at the *Conservatoire National* in Paris, so he educated the next generation of French oboists.

As the founder of the *Deutsche Bachsolisten*, Winschermann made many recordings with them. The recording I listened to was a recording of the *Oboe Concerto in C major*, op.9, no. 4 by Tomaso Albinoni.³¹ I found it relatively pleasing to listen to. In my opinion Winschermann's sound is close to what we are used to today. His articulation is very soft. With that I mean that his tongue is touching the reed in a soft way, so rather a d-sound than a harder t-sound. He uses vibrato, especially in the second movement. And to be honest, it was more vibrato than I expected from a German oboist. I expected the sound to be very solid and straight, but it had more delicacies to it. I might have to change my prejudice of the German sound a little bit. The second movement is a slow movement and he plays with very little embellishment. The only ornaments he uses are little trills. The sound of the oboe is still more nasal than what we are used to today. But I can hear that he is using the lower overtones. There is a darker edge to his sound than to the sound of a French oboist. Unfortunately, I

²⁹ A.W.J. de Jonge, "Stotijn, Jaap Hendrik (1891-1970)", in *Biografisch Woordenboek van Nederland 1880-2000* 6. Huygens ING, 2002-. Last modified November 12, 2013, <http://resources.huygens.knaw.nl/bwn1880-2000/lemmata/bwn6/stotijn>.

³⁰ Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, *Concerto for Oboe and Orchestra in C major, KV314*, with Jaap Stotijn (oboe) and the Wiener Symphoniker, conducted by Wilhelm Loibner, recorded May 1956, Philips 462 552-2, September 1998, CD.

³¹ Tomaso Albinoni, *Concerto for Oboe and Orchestra in C major, op.9, no.4*, with Helmut Winschermann (oboe) and the Deutsche Bachsolisten, conducted by Helmut Winschermann, recorded in 1965, Nonesuch H-1148, 1967, LP.

was not able to find a recording of Winschermann playing a piece by Mozart or another composer from the classical period.

The recording of Pierlot I listened to was a recording of the *Oboe Concerto in C major*, RV447 by Antonio Vivaldi.³² The first thing that struck me was the speed of his vibrato. Compared to the speed of Winschermann's it was much faster. His technical abilities are very good; all the fast notes and tricky jumps in the concerto are there. I would describe his sound as quite thin and penetrating. He uses the higher overtones of the oboe more. It is a more direct sound than that of Winschermann. I can hear this best in his articulation, which has more a t-sound than the softer d-sound. I was also able to find a recording of Pierlot playing the *Quartet for Oboe and Strings in F major*, KV370 by W.A. Mozart.³³ In this recording I hear the same characteristics of his sound as in the recording of the Vivaldi Concerto. It is a very delicate, thin and penetrating sound.

Listening to Jaap Stotijn's playing with our modern ears, the sound he produces is, compared to what we are used to today, thin and penetrating. In his recording of the Mozart concerto with the Wiener Symfoniker from May 1956, the musical lines he makes are very melodic and refined.³⁴ It is probably not the way we would play this concerto now, it is a bit too romantic for our modern taste. In my opinion Mozart should be played lightly and controlled, I would say, in a vertical way. With "too romantic," I mean it is played too horizontal. It is too heavy melodically. A big contrast to the musical lines is his staccato. The staccato passages are not smooth at all. He is using double staccato and at that time it was a way to show off.³⁵ To my taste it breaks up the nice lines he is making too much. His staccato does not fit into the rest of the music. The vibrato he is using is very delicate. The amplitude is small and sometimes barely noticeable. He tends to make little swells on notes. I would say his vibrato is more like Winschermann's. It is very soft and much slower than the vibrato of Pierlot.

Comparing Jaap Stotijn's recording to recordings from French or German oboists of his time, I can understand the claim that the Dutch school is a combination of the two other schools. I find Stotijn's sound rounder than the sound of the Pierlot, but not as thick as the sound of the Winschermann. But Winschermann's sound is still thin to our ears.

Van der Heide pointed out to me that most recordings we now have of Jaap Stotijn were recorded when he was at least sixty years old. This means that he was unfortunately already past his prime. Van der Heide let me listen to a recording made with the *Residentie Orkest of The Hague* in 1929.³⁶ It was a recording of the *Piet Hein Rhapsodie* by Peter van Anrooy. Jaap Stotijn played the oboe solo in this recording. His oboe playing in this recording is of a much higher level than in his solo recordings. It sounds like he had more control over his playing than in his later recording of the Mozart concerto.

2.4. Octave key

Burgess speaks of the Dutch using a French oboe with a special automatic octave-key mechanism with manual override.³⁷ Coincidentally I have this particular system on my own oboe, made by Lorée. My old

³² Antonio Vivaldi, *Concerto in C major*, RV447, with Pierre Pierlot (oboe) and I solisti Veneti, conducted by Claudio Scimone, recorded in 1960, Musical Heritage Society Inc. 951, 1980, LP.

³³ Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, *Oboe Quartet*, KV370, with Pierre Pierlot (oboe), Arthur Grumiaux, Max Lesueur, Janos Scholz (strings), Philips, 1975, LP.

³⁴ Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, *Concerto for Oboe and Orchestra in C major*, KV314, with Jaap Stotijn (oboe) and the Wiener Symphoniker, conducted by Wilhelm Loibner, recorded May 1956, Philips 462 552-2, September 1998, CD.

³⁵ Interview with Hans Sonneveld.

³⁶ Peter van Anrooy, *Piet Hein Rhapsodie*, het Residentie Orkest, conducted by Peter van Anrooy, recorded October 17, 1929, HMV FD16, LP.

³⁷ Burgess and Haynes, *The Oboe*, 205.

teacher Rienus Oude Kempers told me that this mechanism was an idea of Jaap Stotijn. Sonneveld notes that Jaap Stotijn had a lot of connections with various oboists in the world. He probably saw the French using a semi-automatic octave mechanism, being able to open the 2nd octave key manually. He probably then asked the oboe manufacturer Lorée to add this key to his oboe. Fortunately the automatic octave mechanism Lorée uses makes it possible to open the 2nd octave key manually. This extra key would not have the same effect on oboes made by other manufacturers.³⁸ I do not know any other oboist who has the same octave key system on his oboe as I do. As far as I know most oboists buy a simpler semi-automatic oboe now. It is not commonly used in the Netherlands anymore, but I am proud to have it on my oboe. But the fact that I have an oboe made by Lorée can be considered to be Dutch. In Europe most oboists play on oboes made by Marigaux or Rigoutat, with some smaller national brands represented as well. Only in the Netherlands have I heard of oboists playing on oboes made by Lorée.

2.5. The influence of Jaap Stotijn on other players

Jaap Stotijn taught only in The Hague, but he had a big influence on the oboe scene in the Netherlands. I believe the reason why Jaap Stotijn was so influential was because he had many students. And because he had so many students, his way of playing was heard everywhere in the Netherlands. Most orchestras in the Netherlands had students of his in important positions: Haakon Stotijn played in the *Concertgebouw Orchestra*,³⁹ Han de Vries played there as well,⁴⁰ Rykle van der Heide played in *Noordhollands Philharmonisch Orkest*,⁴¹ Werner Herbers played in *Rotterdams Philharmonisch Orkest* and the *Concertgebouw Orchestra*⁴² and Cees van der Kraan played also in the *Concertgebouw Orchestra*,⁴³ to name a few. Oboists playing in Jaap Stotijn's style were heard around the world, with the result that internationally Stotijn's way of playing came to be known as the Dutch style of playing. Although there were still oboists playing in different styles, the Stotijn school was dominant.

An example of a Dutch oboist who played in a different way from Jaap Stotijn is Sam Zilverberg. Zilverberg represented the French school in the Netherlands. He was the solo oboist of the *Radio Filharmonisch Orkest* in Hilversum.⁴⁴ Sonneveld told me that Zilverberg honoured his name, as his playing had a silvery sound.⁴⁵ I have been able to find two of his recordings. One is the wind quintet *La Cheminée du Roi René* by Milhaud.⁴⁶ Zilverberg plays with a quintet from the Dutch Radio Philharmonic Orchestra. The second recording is the *Suite for Violin, Oboe, Trumpet and Strings in D* by Georg P. Telemann.⁴⁷ This recording was produced in 1953 and recorded with the *Concert Hall Chamber Orchestra*, conducted by Denis Stevens. I found the sound of the oboe quite thin. It blended

³⁸ Interview with Hans Sonneveld.

³⁹ "Haakon Stotijn," accessed April 22, 2018, <https://soundofstotijn.nl/haakon-stotijn/>

⁴⁰ "Han de Vries," accessed April 22, 2018, <https://www.muзикweb.nl/Link/M00000243872/CLASSICAL/Han-de-Vries>

⁴¹ Interview with Rykle van der Heide.

⁴² "Biografie Werner Herbers," accessed April 22, 2018, <http://www.ebonyband.nl/ebony-band/over-ons/biografie-werner-herbers/>

⁴³ *Wikipedia*, s.v. "Cees van der Kraan," last modified October 8, 2015, https://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cees_van_der_Kraan

⁴⁴ "RPhO musici 1952/53," accessed April 5, 2018, <http://www.radiofilharmonischorkest.nl/rpho-musici-195253>

⁴⁵ Interview with Hans Sonneveld.

⁴⁶ Darius Milhaud, *La Cheminée du Roi René*, Blaaskwintet van het Radio Filharmonisch Orkest, with Adriaan Bonsel (flute), Sam Zilverberg (oboe), Jos D'Hondt (clarinet), Anton Doomernik (bassoon), Kees Versney (French horn), BnF collection, 1956.

⁴⁷ Georg P. Telemann, *Suite for Violin, Oboe, Trumpet and Strings in D*, Concert Hall Chamber Orchestra, with Sam Zilverberg (oboe), Fred Hausdoerfer (trumpet), Louis Kaufman (violin), conducted by Denis Stevens, Concert Hall G-17, 1953, LP.

really well with the trumpet; I could sometimes not tell if it was an oboe or a trumpet playing, or both. Before Haakon Stotijn took the job of principal oboe with the *Concertgebouw Orchestra* in 1940, the French oboist Georges Blanchard played first oboe there. He retired in 1943.⁴⁸ A colleague of Blanchard in the *Concertgebouw Orchestra* was W. Peddemors. Peddemors was more a representative of the German school than the French. Simon Houttuin was a student of Peddemors and was solo oboist of the *Rotterdam Philharmonisch Orkest* in 1958. He was playing an oboe made by the German manufacturer Püchner.⁴⁹

Jaap Stotijn was very amicable. He played everywhere and everyone knew him. Because of this a lot of oboists wanted to take lessons with him. According to Rykle van der Heide he was a good teacher, especially for the talented students. He was a stimulating teacher, but his didactical skills were not great.⁵⁰ This means that he probably could not explain techniques in various ways or describe exactly what he was doing to create a certain effect. He probably demonstrated how to do it and that what you had to go with. Sonneveld says that he was not the right teacher for everyone.⁵¹

3. My reed experiment

Before I go into more detail about the Dutch school reeds themselves, and my experiment with making reeds in that style, I want to give a quick overview on how to make a reed to clarify any technical terms I use later. The knowledge of how to make oboe reeds was taught to me by word of mouth. This is the most common way. I had reed making lessons with various teachers. My first teacher used a little book *Hobo rieten maken, handleiding voor de beginner* by Huib Nieuwenhuizen as reference material.⁵² As far as I know this book is only available in Dutch. There are many other books about reed making, such as *Das Oboenrohr* by Karl Hentschel and *Oboe Reed-Making Simplified* by Barbara Verburg.⁵³ If I were to teach reed making I would probably make a reference sheet myself and not use a book in the lessons. The author of the book would almost definitely make different reeds than I do and I would not want to confuse my students.



Figure 1. A tube of cane

3.1. How to make a reed: an overview

We start with a tube of cane (Figure 1). The Latin name of the cane we use for oboe reeds, but also for the reeds of the bassoon, clarinet, saxophone, etc., is *Arundo Donax*. In Europe this plant is mainly found around the Mediterranean, but it is also found in California and Asia. The diameter of the tube of cane for oboe reeds is between 9 and 11 mm, depending on the preferences of the individual player. A general rule is that if the diameter of the cane is smaller, the opening of the reed will be bigger.

⁴⁸ "Haakon Stotijn," accessed April 6, 2018, <https://soundofstotijn.nl/haakon-stotijn/>.

⁴⁹ Ledet, *Oboe Reed Styles*, 101.

⁵⁰ Interview with Rykle van der Heide.

⁵¹ Interview with Hans Sonneveld.

⁵² Huib Nieuwenhuizen, *Hobo rieten maken, handleiding voor de beginner* (Unpublished compendium, 1995).

⁵³ Karl Hentschel, *Das Oboenrohr: Eine Bauanleitung* (Celle: Moeck Verlag GmbH, 1995).

Barbara Verburg, *Oboe Reed-Making Simplified* (North Charleston: Createspace Independent Publishing Platform, 2002).

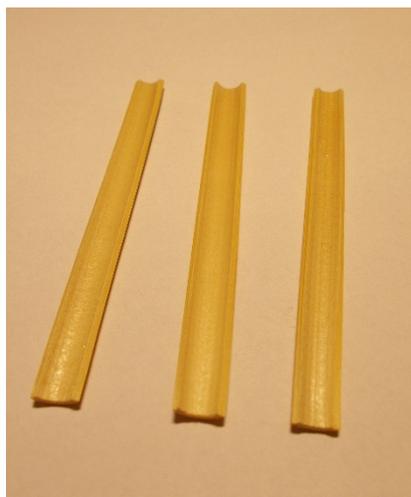


Figure 2. Split cane

The tube of cane is split into three parts (Figure 2). The cane is still very thick and has to be thinned on the inside of the tube. The process of thinning the cane is called gouging. How thin to gouge the cane depends on the preference of the oboist, but today the most common thickness is somewhere between 0,55 and 0,65 mm. But there are always extremes, as I will discuss later. Oboists use gouging machines to make this process easier, as they can be set to a certain thickness and will remove cane until this thickness is reached. At the time of Jaap Stotijn the gouging machines were quite expensive and not everyone could afford one. In *De kunst van het rieten maken* Stotijn describes the process and the tools you need to gouge cane by hand. Jaap Stotijn writes that he himself uses a machine as gouging by hand takes a lot of time and skill.⁵⁴ I also can imagine that it is safer to use a machine, because the tools used are quite sharp and if you slip, you can hurt yourself badly.

After the cane is gouged it is folded in half and shaped (Figure 3). This shape is also depending on the oboist's preferences. Some people prefer a very wide shape and some people prefer a smaller shape. I would say that the most oboists use a shape that is between 7 and 7,5 mm at the top. To be able to get a consistent shape, most oboists use shaping machines or hand-shapes. These are metal forms on which you place your gouged cane. With a knife you follow the shape of the metal form and cut away the excess cane. Every piece of cane comes out the same. After shaping the cane is tied onto a staple (figure 4 and 5). The staple can differ in length from 42 to 47 mm.

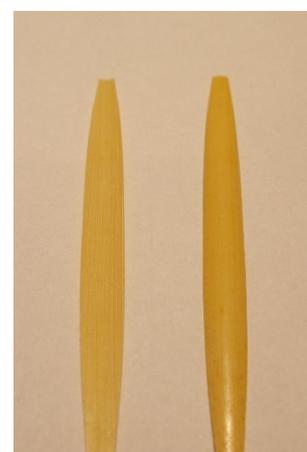


Figure 3. Gouged and shaped cane

Now comes the most important part of the reed making, the scrape. This is the part of the reed where the bark is taken away and it is the most important factor concerning what the finished reed will sound like. The scrape is very individual and every oboist does it slightly differently, although you can see some general trends among oboists from the same country.

I would like to mention a few general rules in reed making which I noticed myself or which are basic physics.

The shorter the reed is, the higher the oboe will sound. We can say that the general pitch of the instrument is higher. By general pitch I mean that an A' at 440Hz or 442Hz will result in a lower or higher sound over the whole range of the oboe.



Figure 4. A tied-on reed

The wider the reed is, the lower the oboe will sound. This I know from my own experience, a wider reed will result in a lower general pitch.

⁵⁴ Stotijn, *De Kunst van het maken van Hoborieten*, 7.



Figure 5. A staple

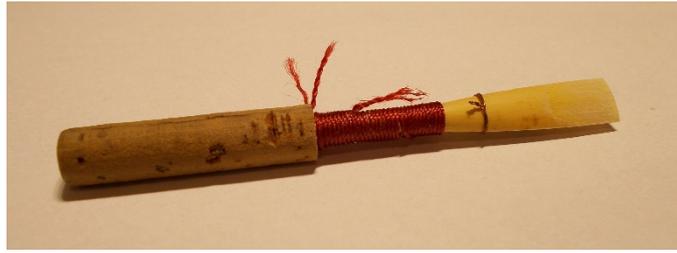


Figure 6. A finished reed

3.2. Jaap Stotijn's reed

According to Sonneveld, the biggest difference between Jaap Stotijn and his contemporaries was the reed he used. His reeds were wider, thicker and shorter than reeds made in the French style.⁵⁵ If I compare the reeds of Jaap Stotijn to my own today, there are a few big differences. The staple Jaap Stotijn used was about 39 mm long; mine are 47 mm long. He gouged his cane around 0,9 mm thick; my cane is about 0,55 mm thick. My reed is about 7,5 mm wide; his reed was 8 mm wide.⁵⁶ The smallest variations in thickness or width make a big difference in the qualities of the reed.

For comparison I have added a few examples of reeds from German and French oboists.

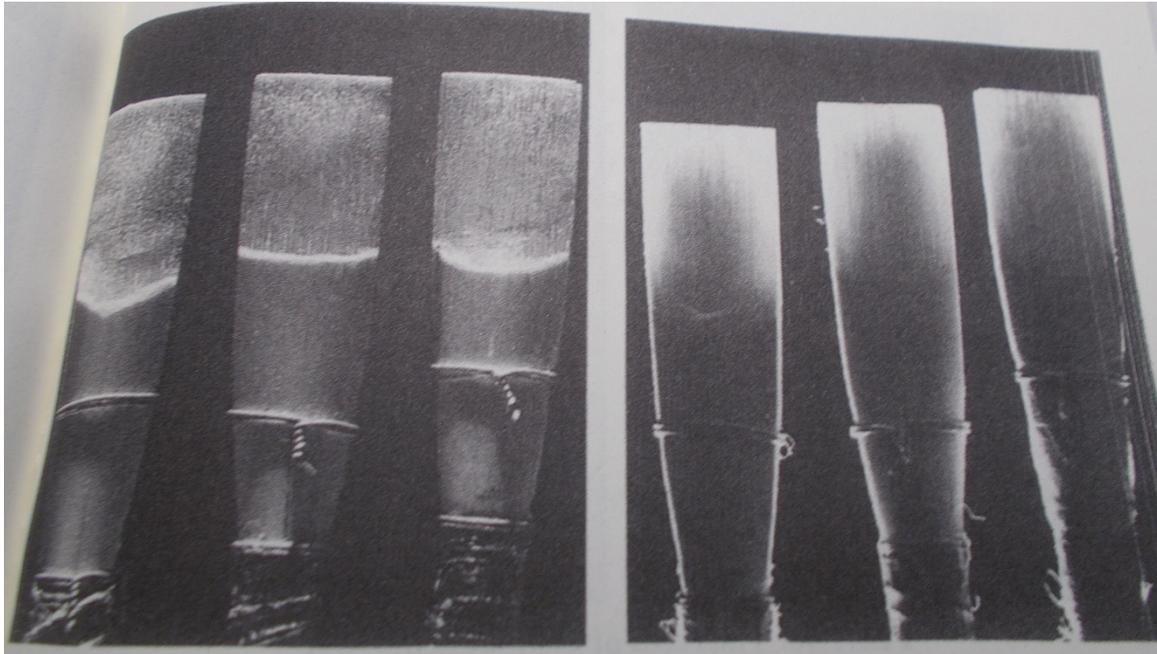


Figure 7. Reeds from the German oboist Kurt Kalmus, 1958 in Munich. The reeds are 8,1 to 8,2 mm wide and approximately 68 mm long.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Ledet, *Oboe Reed Styles: Theory and Practice*, 103.

⁵⁶ Interview with Hans Sonneveld.

⁵⁷ Ledet, *Oboe Reed Styles: Theory and Practice*, 96-97, 179.

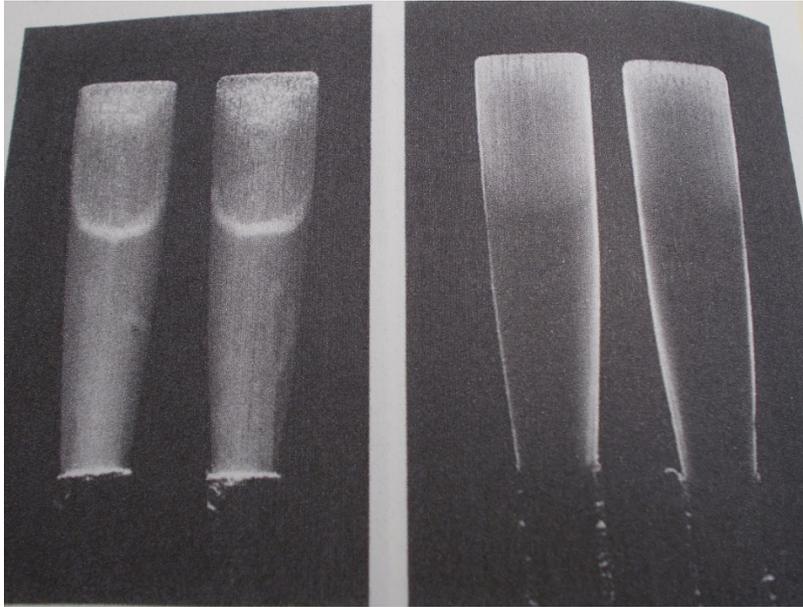


Figure 8. Reeds from the German oboist Helmut Schlövogt, 1933-1941 Gewandhaus Orchester Leipzig, 1941-1974 Berliner Philharmoniker. The reeds are 6,55 mm wide and 72 mm long.⁵⁸

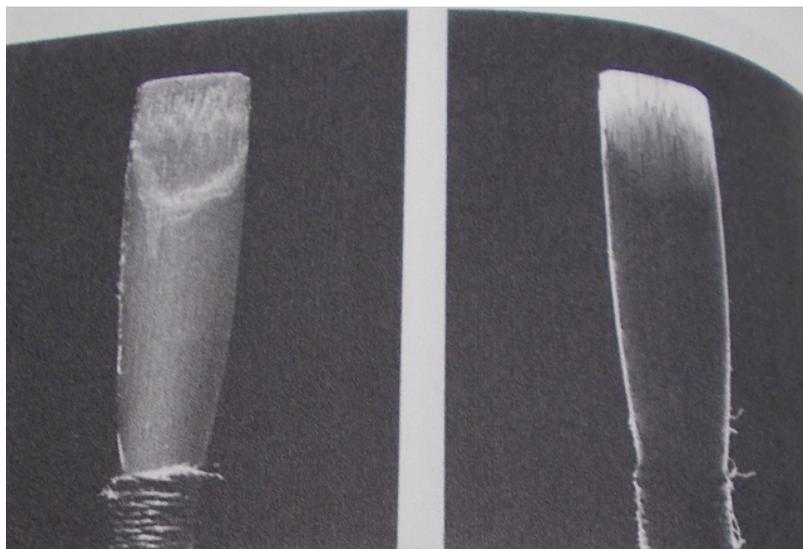


Figure 9. Reed from the French oboist Pierre Bajeux, 1899-1961, Paris. The reed is 6,8 mm wide and 73 mm long.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ Ledet, *Oboe Reed Styles: Theory and Practice*, 96-98, 179.

⁵⁹ *Ibid*, 92, 179.

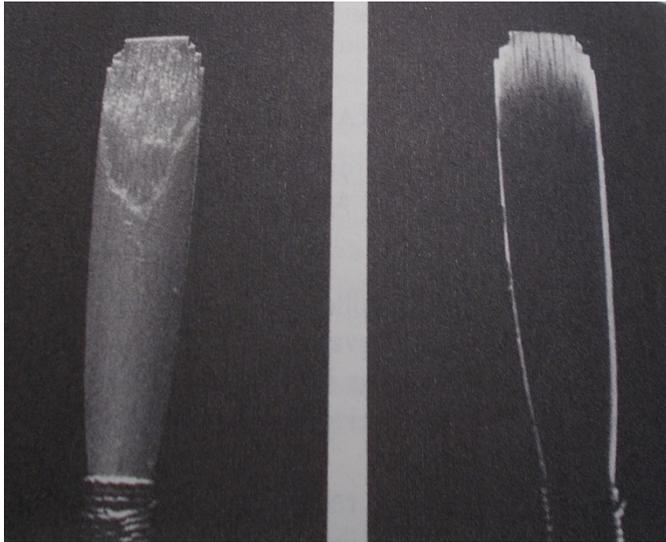


Figure 10. Reed from the French oboist L.F.A. Bleuzet, 1874-1961, Paris. The reed is 6,85 mm wide and 75 mm long.⁶⁰

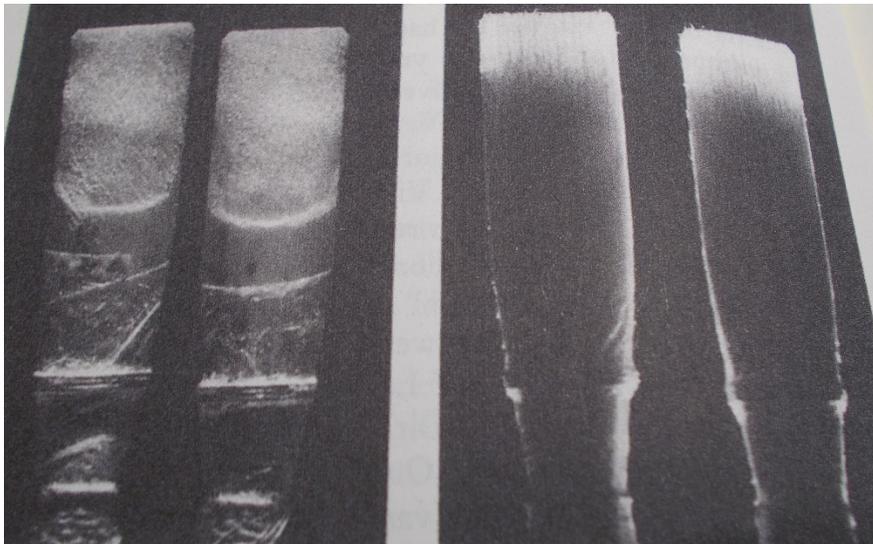


Figure 11. Reeds from Jaap Stotijn. They are 8 mm wide and 66 mm long.⁶¹

I had three different sources of measurements for the reeds of Jaap Stotijn. My first source is the book my first reed teacher used in her reed classes, *Hobo rieten maken, handleiding voor de beginner* by Huib Nieuwenhuizen. In this book he describes two types of reeds, a 'Stotijn-type' reed and a more modern version of it. The measurements he uses are different from my other sources. The second source was measurements I received of the Stotijn reed in Sonneveld's possession. The third source was the measurements from the book *Oboe Reed Styles, theory and practice* by David A. Ledet. Jaap Stotijn wrote a book on how to make reeds, *De Kunst van het maken van Hoborieten*. But

⁶⁰ Ledet, *Oboe Reed Styles: Theory and Practice*, 92, 179.

⁶¹ *Ibid*, 104, 179.

unfortunately he does not include any measurements of his reeds. He only mentions the diameter of the tube of cane should be between 10 and 11 mm.⁶²

In the table below I give an overview of all the measurements I found in my sources.

	STOTIJN-TYPE REED FROM H. NIEUWENHUIZEN⁶³	STOTIJN REED FROM H. SONNEVELD⁶⁴	STOTIJN REED 1 FROM D. LEDET⁶⁵	STOTIJN REED 2 FROM D. LEDET
WIDTH AT THE TOP	7,5 mm	8 mm	8 mm	7,8 mm
THICKNESS OF GOUGE	0,7 mm	0,85 mm	0,94 mm	0,94 mm
LENGTH OF STAPLE	42 mm	40 mm	38 mm	37 mm
LENGTH OF CANE FROM BINDING TO THE TOP	27 mm	27 mm	28 mm	28 mm
OVERALL LENGTH OF REED	69 mm	67 mm	66 mm	65 mm

3.3. My experiment

In my experiment I tried to reconstruct a reed of Jaap Stotijn and I compared it to my ordinary reeds. Because I had different sources of measurements and those measurements differed slightly, I decided to make two versions of the reed. The first version is according to the instructions of Nieuwenhuizen. The second version is according to the measurements I received from Sonneveld and the measurements I found in the book by Ledet.

The process of making the reed was a little bit weird. I do not have a shaper with the right measurements, so I had to shape my cane by hand. I had not done that for a very long time, so my shapes became a bit wonky. Also, because the cane is much thicker than what I am used to, the process of tying on felt weird. The cane did not lie as flat as what I am used to and there was a really big bump on the staple.

For the first version I followed the exact instructions written down by Nieuwenhuizen. The way of scraping is different from what I usually do. I scrape moving the knife away from me. The instructions for this reed told me to scrape towards me most of the time. Only at the very end, when smoothing the scrape, was I told to scrape away from me. The different way of scraping resulted in a less neat reed than what I usually make. The scrape is also much longer than what I usually make. My own reeds have a scrape of 10 to 11mm. The reed I made in this version had a scrape of 14 to 15mm.

It also felt like I had to take away a lot of cane because it was much thicker to start with. When I first tried the reed, I did not expect it to make a sound yet, but it did. I made three reeds in this version. The first one cracked. I think the thick cane made it less flexible when I scraped it, so that when I put

⁶² Stotijn, *De Kunst van het maken van Hoborieten*, 2.

⁶³ Nieuwenhuizen, *Hobo rieten maken*, 8, 15.

⁶⁴ Interview with Hans Sonneveld.

⁶⁵ Ledet, *Oboe Reed Styles: Theory and Practice*, 179.

pressure on it, it cracked. The second one works, but the sound is a bit harsh. I might have taken away too much cane in certain places. The third reed seems to work all right, so I chose that one to use for my recordings of the version 1 reed, which are Audio 3 and 4.

The reed is about 6 mm shorter than my normal reed. When I checked the tuning I was surprised it was only slightly high. If I relax my embouchure a bit more I think I could play this reed in tune with the rest of the orchestra. I expect that the wide shape and the thick cane counteract the shortness of the reed and make it play more or less in tune.

One quality of the reed which I really liked was the ease in playing the lower notes. Usually I struggle to play the low notes softly, but it was much easier with this reed. The long scrape might play a part in this, so I am thinking of making my scrape slightly longer if I have to play second oboe in the orchestra. The second oboe part usually has more low notes than the first oboe and you have to be able to play those low notes very soft as well.

For the second version of the Stotijn-reed I followed the same routine as for the first until the moment I started the scrape. I shaped the cane by hand and tied the cane onto the staple rather shortly. But the scraping I did according to photos and measurements that I took from my different sources. I scraped in my normal way, with the knife moving away from me. It took me much longer to get some sound from the reed. Probably because by moving the knife away from me you take less cane away than moving the knife towards you. For every knife-movement of the first version I had to make about five knife-movements for the second version. This gave me the feeling of taking too much away. I made four reeds in total of this version, but I got only two of them to work.

Playing on the reeds of the second version felt much the same as playing on the ones from the first version. As soon as I had a sound coming out I could keep it going quite easily. I did not have to work hard to sustain the sound. I do not think my intonation was as stable as it usually is, though. Some notes really jumped out at me and were difficult to correct. I do not know the exact reason for this. It could have been the shape, or that the scrape was not entirely balanced. The tonguing was fine, but a little bit harder than on my first version reed. I could have scraped it a bit more to make the tonguing easier, but I was afraid it would lose too much of its sound. Making a reed is always about finding a balance between a reed easy enough to play and a nice sounding reed. The second version reed is heard in Audio 5 and 6.

To compare the reeds I made recordings of two excerpts from the orchestra repertoire for the oboe. The first excerpt is the oboe solo at the beginning of the second movement of the *Concerto for Violin op.77* by Johannes Brahms. This solo is very melodic and has to be played with a perfect legato. The second excerpt I chose is the overture of *La Scala di Seta* by Gioachino Rossini. In this overture there is a passage with very fast tonguing. Most oboists would use a double-tonguing technique to be able to play this passage, as do I. I think those two excerpts are a good contrast and show how versatile a reed has to be.

In Audio 1 and 2 I play the excerpts from Brahms and Rossini on my ordinary reed. I used these recordings as a starting point for comparison. Audio 3 is the Brahms excerpt on reed version 1. I was able to make a nice legato with this reed. But I find the intonation is not good. In particular, the Cs are not stable. The lower C² is too flat and the higher C³ is too sharp. I like the tone quality of the higher register (A² and upwards). It has a nice silver edge to it. But I find the middle register (around D²) too muted. The lower register sounds good. Audio 4 is the Rossini with the same reed. I find it an okay version, but not as clear as with my own reed. I seem to get fewer unwanted extra noises than with my own reed, which means the reed speaks well. But the staccato is a little bit too fluffy for my taste.

Audio 5 and 6 are made with reed version 2. Audio 5 is again the Brahms excerpt. I found it more difficult to play the legato lines with this reed. Sometimes the sound breaks away if the note does not speak immediately. Also, I could not make as much contrast in dynamics as I would have liked. I think the reed was slightly too hard. But if I had made it lighter I would have compromised on the sound quality. The intonation is not stable enough to my taste. Again, the Cs are out of tune. As this happened with both reeds I think the reason why this is happening is in the reed, but I have no idea exactly what I would have to change to make it better. Usually, if the Cs are out of tune or do not sound satisfactorily, it means the reed is not balanced. Audio 6 demonstrates the Rossini excerpt. The staccato is surprisingly clear. I expected it to be fluffy as the reed was a bit hard, but it is not. I think the tip was thin enough to make the staccato come out easily.

A note I would like to make about this experiment is about the practice I had with the reeds. I did not practice the excerpts with any of the reeds I played on, neither my own nor the Stotijn-reeds. I know what my own reeds require concerning intonation and tonguing, and if I would have practiced on the Stotijn-reeds, the intonation might have been better. What I wanted was a gut reaction and I thought it was best to just play on them and see what happened.



Figure 12. All 7 reeds I made for this experiment



Figure 13. My version 1 reed, used in audio 3 and audio 4



Figure 14. My version 2 reed, used in audio 5 and 6

3.4. What can I take from this experiment?

When I learned to play the oboe, I played on reeds that were closer to the Stotijn-reed than the reeds I use now. I used 42 mm staples and my reeds were as wide as the reeds of Stotijn. However, the cane was very thin, around 0,52 mm, and the scrape was much shorter, around 9 mm. I still play on reeds that are slightly wider than most of my colleagues' reeds, because I feel most comfortable with a wider shape. But I will probably never go back to 42 mm staples. In that case, I would have to change the tension in my embouchure too much to be able to play in tune, and I would not be comfortable playing that way.

What I will take away from this experiment is the longer scrape. It made a big difference with the lower notes, which would make life much easier if I have to play second oboe in the orchestra. I will have to experiment with it on my ordinary reeds to find a good balance between long enough and not too long. I would also like to see what effect the thicker cane has on my ordinary reeds. I would not use cane as thick as in this experiment, but I would like to know the effect of using cane that is a hundredth or two hundredths of a millimetre thicker. Also, I would like to see if how my reeds would work if I left the back of the scrape thicker than I do now and made the tip even thinner.

4. A change to the octave key system

On the oboe you will find three octave keys. The first octave key (green circle in Figure 15) is used for the E^{''} to G^{is''}, the second octave key (red circle in Figure 15) for the A^{''} to C^{'''} and the third for the E^{'''} and higher (blue circle in Figure 15). The octave key is used to change an E['] to an E^{''} with the same basic fingering. The keys uncover holes to make it easier to play the first harmonic, or second harmonic in the case of the third octave key. The mechanical changes Stotijn wanted to have made on his oboe concern the first and second octave key. In general, you could say that there are two ways of operating the octave keys: with an automatic system or with a semi-automatic octave system. In the semi-automatic system (Figure 15) the holes for the octaves are opened by two different keys. The first octave hole is opened by a key operated by the left thumb under the oboe. The second octave hole is opened by a key operated by the joint of the index finger on the side of the oboe (shown by the arrow in Figure 15). The automatic octave system (Figure 16) has only the key for the thumb and the second octave hole is opened by a system of joints and springs (circled in red in Figure 16). The way it works is that as soon as you lift the left ring finger the second hole will open instead of the first.

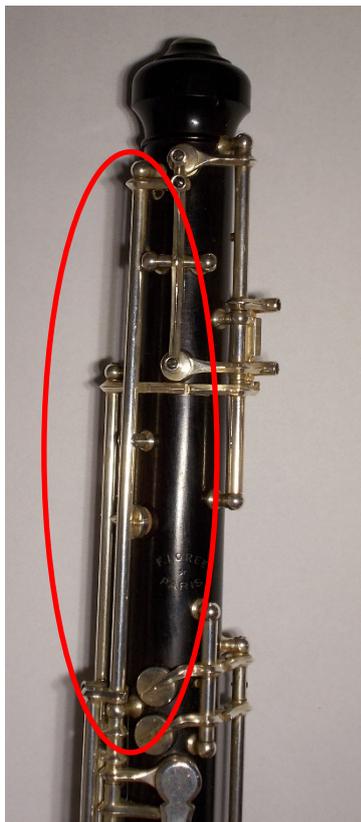


Figure 16. Automatic octave system on Cor Anglais made by Lorée

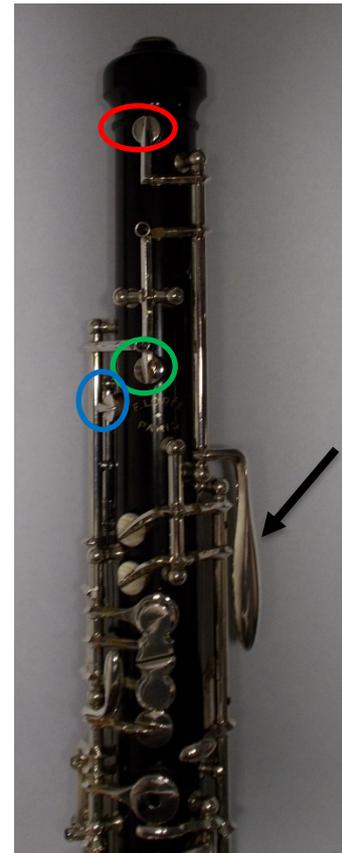


Figure 15. Semi-Automatic octave system on Oboe d'Amore made by Lorée

Jaap Stotijn used an automatic octave system, but he added the extra key for the second octave hole (Figure 17).⁶⁶ With this key he could overrule the automatic closing of the second hole when he put his ring finger down. We can

only guess why he did this, but we can assume that he saw the French oboists playing with the semi-automatic system and he thought it very useful to have the extra key. I find it useful as it allows me to play certain contemporary techniques that would not have been possible with a normal automatic octave system. One example: for certain flageolets or multi-phonics you want to open the second octave hole but still keep the third finger of the left hand down. With a normal automatic system this would not be possible, because the third finger closes the second octave hole automatically and opens the first octave hole. I can overrule that with the extra key.

I made three short videos of the operation of the different octave key systems. In Video 1 I show the semi-automatic octave system on my oboe d'amore made by Lorée. You can see that I can open the two octave holes independently whether my ring finger is down or up. In Video 2 I show the automatic octave system on my cor anglais made by Lorée. Here you see that which octave whole opens depends on whether my ring finger is down or lifted. Video 3 shows the octave key system on my normal oboe made by Lorée. It is an automatic

⁶⁶ Interview Hans Sonneveld.

octave system, so the beginning of the video is much the same as Video 2. But with the extra key on the left I can overrule the system and open the upper octave hole even if my ring finger is down.

5. Jaap Stotijn as an inspiration to Dutch composers

When I think of music written by French romantic composers I always have an image of a lot of notes and very detailed dynamics. Pieces I think of as being typically French music are *La Mèr* by Claude Debussy or *Le Tombeau de Couperin* and *Daphnis et Chloé* by Maurice Ravel. I find this music very virtuosic and atmospheric. When I think of music written by German composers of the same period I find it more robust and big-sounding. It has more long and heavy chords and seemingly never-ending phrases. I think here of music written by Anton Bruckner or Richard Wagner. The composers demanded different things from the oboist. In France the composers demanded a very versatile oboist technically, who could play in a delicate way. In Germany the oboist had to be able to produce a big sustained sound that would not be drowned out in the big brass-dominated chords. In this way composers influenced the style of oboe playing in their country. The same happened in the Netherlands. Oboists would have been able to play what composers wrote for them. Sometimes, however, composers are inspired by musicians to write for them. Jaap Stotijn was one of those musicians who inspired composers to write music for him.

The Dutch composers Hendrik Andriessen, Clara Wildschut, Bernhard van den Sigtenhorst Meyer, Alexander Voormolen, Hugo van Dalen, and others wrote music for him or dedicated their music to him. Stotijn's wife Geertruida 'Truitje' Molenaar also inspired composers to write music for them. Van den Sigtenhorst Meyer and Hans Schouwman are two of the composers who wrote music for oboe and soprano and dedicated it to them.

Jaap Stotijn lived in a time of late romanticism. With that I mean that expression was perhaps more important than technical perfection. There are anecdotes of Jaap Stotijn not making it up to the highest note in a run during a performance. He would just try again and when he made it the audience awarded him with a great ovation. He was a showman. When I look at music written for him by Dutch composers, they all feel like pieces with possibilities for a lot of expression.⁶⁷ Of course, there are technical challenging parts, but those always seem meant to show expression rather than just being a lot of notes.

I studied the *Sonatine* op.34 for oboe solo by Bernhard van den Sigtenhorst Meyer (1888-1953). It is a piece consisting of three small movements and written for Jaap Stotijn in 1930. The music Van den Sigtenhorst Meyer wrote was impressionistic with some oriental influences. But after 1923 he got his inspiration from more traditional music forms as well, like the sonata and variation forms.⁶⁸ Also this piece is based on a more traditional form, as the title of the piece already show. In the first movement you recognise the sonata form, as there is a little reprise. And in the third movement, which is called Ritornello, you recognise a theme with little variations.

⁶⁷ For a list of compositions, see appendix 1.

⁶⁸ Jaap van Benthem, "Bernhard van den Sigtenhorst Meyer," in *Het honderd componisten boek: Nederlandse muziek van Albicastro tot Zweers*, ed. Pay-Uun Hiu and Jolande van der Klis et al. (Haarlem: Uitgeverij J.H. Gottmer / H.J.W. Becht BV, 1997), 308.



Figure 17. Automatic octave system plus extra key on Oboe made by Lorée

SONATINE.

B. v. d. Sigtenhorst Meyer, Op. 34.

Example 1.⁶⁹

In Example 1 above you see the first few bars of the first movement. The opening up to the fermata in the ninth bar is what I consider to be the exposition of the theme. The last few bars of Example 1 above already show the variation on the theme. In Example 2 below you see the reprise. While not an exact sonata form, the composer used it as inspiration. The reprise starts in the last bar of the first line. In Audio 7 you hear the theme and the reprise of the theme. In Example 1 and 2 I marked the exact bars you hear in Audio 7.

Example 2.⁷⁰

The second movement has the tempo marking *Tranquillo*. It is a nice cantabile piece. Thinking of the singing qualities in the oboe playing of Jaap Stotijn I believe this suited him really well.

The third movement is a *Ritornello* with the tempo marking *Allegro*. A traditional ritornello was a sort of refrain between solo passages in a solo concerto or aria in the Baroque era, but slightly varied by

⁶⁹ Bernhard van den Sigtenhorst Meyer, *Sonatine* op.34, “Moderato” for oboe or flute solo (Amsterdam: G. Alsbach &co., 1932).

⁷⁰ Van den Sigtenhorst Meyer, *Sonatine* op. 34, “Moderato”.

using different keys.⁷¹ In this piece the theme is twelve bars long. The first time it returns in the dominant key of the first theme. The second time it returns it is back in the tonic, but it is rhythmically varied.



Example 3.⁷² The passage as heard in the first half of Audio 11

Example 3 above shows the theme of the *Ritornello*. Below, in Example 4, you see the first variation of the theme in a different key. The last example is the rhythmically varied theme (from *più mosso*).



Example 4.⁷³ The passage as heard in the second half of Audio 11



Example 5.⁷⁴

I recorded all three movements. I used my own reed in the recording. The reed experiment I described in chapter three took place after I recorded this piece. I enjoyed playing this piece a lot. The movements felt like a little theatre or showpieces. The dynamic contrasts are great and that makes it suitable to play with different sound approaches. You can really tell a story within the movements, but the movements together also tell a story. The first movement is the introduction, followed by the lyrical second movement, and ending nice showstopper, the virtuosic third movement. For Audio 8 I selected a passage from the first movement in which you can hear the contrasts pretty well. It is a

⁷¹ *Encyclopaedia Britannica Online*, s.v. "Ritornello," accessed March 29, 2018, <https://academic-eb-com.ezproxy.ub.gu.se/levels/collegiate/article/ritornello/63781>.

⁷² Van den Sigtenhorst Meyer, *Sonatine* op.34, "Ritornello".

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

passage that starts piano and has a one-bar crescendo to forte. It returns to piano and pianissimo with little swells.

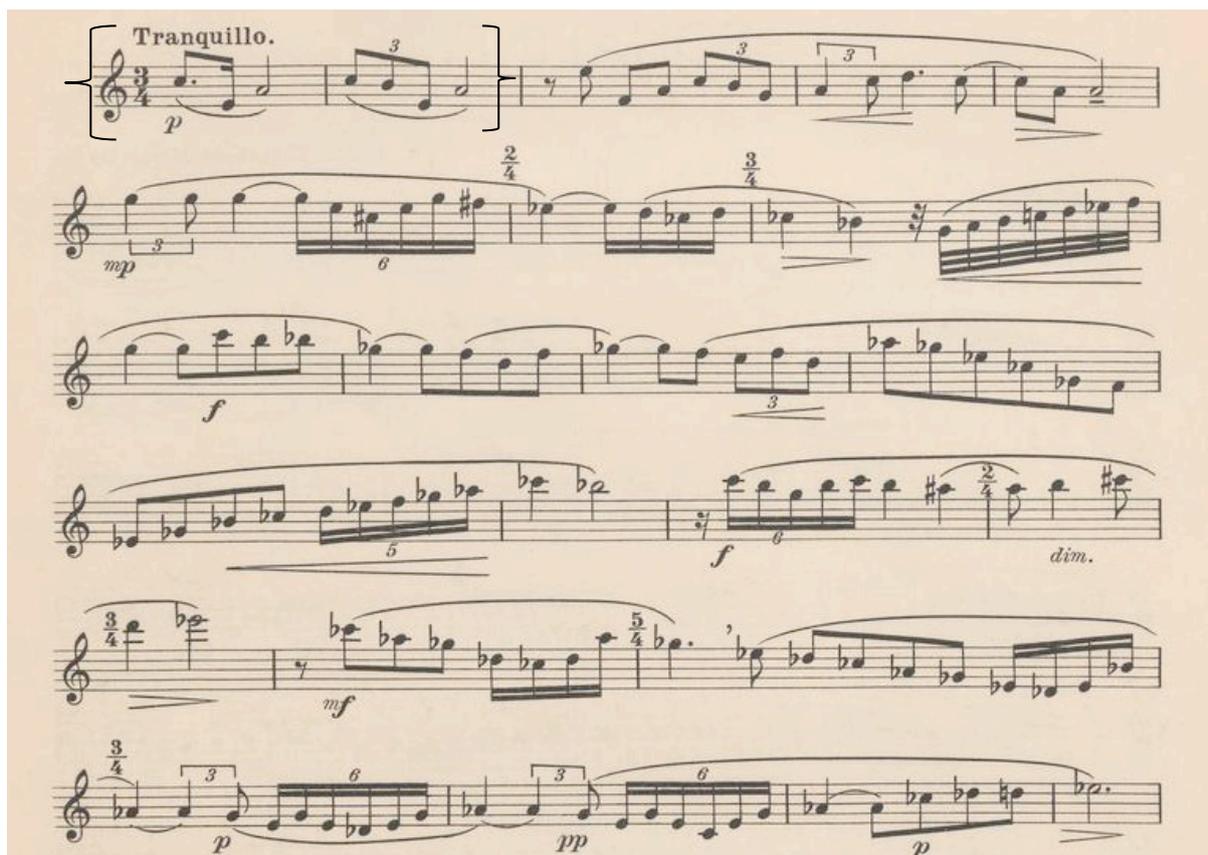


Example 6.⁷⁵ The passage as heard in Audio 8

When I started practising I found it difficult to find the right tempo in the first movement. I could not find any recordings of this piece, which meant I could not take a tempo suggestion from someone else. I had to go completely by what felt like a good tempo for me. The first movement I approached as a text. I wanted to tell a story the way you would tell a fairy tale to a child. I kept moving in my dynamics to keep it interesting. I kept the phrases going for as long as possible and only use the rests to breath if necessary. There were a few general pauses or fermatas in the first movement. I used those to start a new phrase in the story. They introduced either a new theme or a sort of answer to the previous section. I liked the extreme dynamics in the middle part of this movement displayed in the passage in Audio 8. The melody goes from piano to forte in only two bars and only a few bars later you have a quick diminuendo back to piano. The piece ends with a forte A". This is a note that is not easy to play loud and still keep a nice sound. I tried to play it as big as possible without forcing it.

The second movement I approached in a more introverted way. The first two bars sound like a memory of better times to me, maybe a sigh. Audio 9 shows this sigh. I marked the bars you hear in Audio 9 in Example 7. Next is a forte section that felt livelier to me. I wanted to play it out and really sing on the high forte notes. Just before the *più mosso* it turns more introverted again. I tried to shape the first section as a long arc. It goes from introverted to expressive and back to introverted. It also has an arc in pitch. The louder middle section is generally in a higher register than the softer sections. In the *più mosso* I tried to look forward. If you see the first section as a memory, this is more an attempt to move on. I liked the different colours I could give to the different little motives. In Audio 10 you hear a passage from the *più mosso* section with all the different motives. The last section is a memory again. The feeling it represents to me is that of giving up, moving forward, and remaining sad about the past.

⁷⁵ Van den Sigtenhorst Meyer, *Sonatine* op. 34, "Moderato".



Example 7.⁷⁶ In this example you see the arc from piano to forte and back to piano, and also the arc in pitch. The louder middle part concentrates on the upper register, whereas the softer parts lie more in the middle or lower registers.

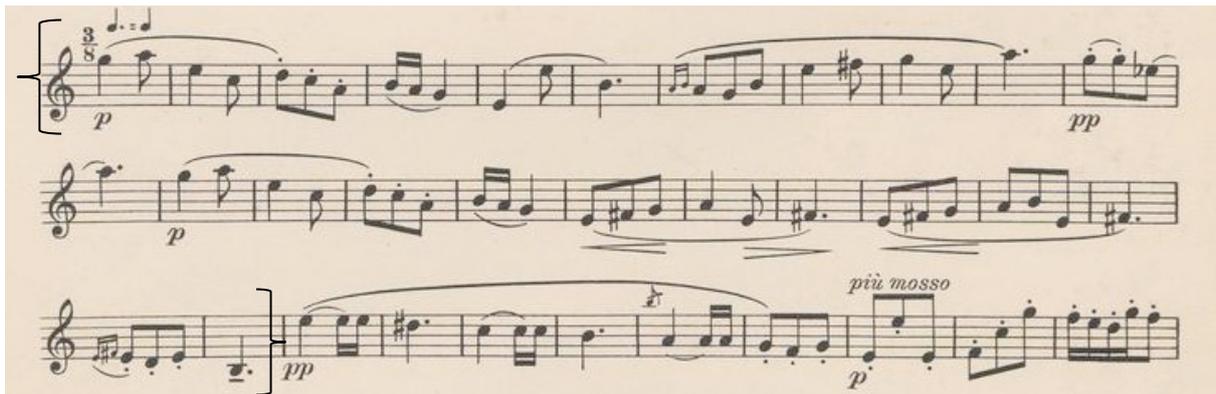


Example 8.⁷⁷ The passage as heard in Audio 10

The third movement was more uplifting. I played it like a dance with static movements. My articulation was stronger than in the first two movements. It is written staccato. I tried not to play it too short, but my tonguing was definitely stronger. I tried to indicate the return of the theme. In Audio 11 you hear the theme and the repetition of the theme. Audio 11 is example 3 and 4 combined. When the time signature changes, the dance changes as well. It becomes more fluid. You see it in the notes as well as there are suddenly a lot of legato slurs. I tried to keep it uplifting, but more lyrical. The image I had was of a girl in a field of flowers walking and humming this little melody. Audio 12 shows this passage. Then in the *più mosso* section there is some excitement building up towards the end. The last few bars I just wanted to play as showy as possible. I do not know if the rhythm was correct, but I wanted to make a statement.

⁷⁶ Van den Sigtenhorst Meyer, *Sonatine* op.34, "Tranquillo".

⁷⁷ Ibid.



Example 9.⁷⁸ The passage as heard in Audio 12

I believe this is a piece that would have suited the style of Jaap Stotijn. It has some theatre in it, which he would have liked, as well as some virtuosic elements, but it is not too technical. When I think of music by 20th-century Dutch composers that I have played over the years,⁷⁹ I feel that it is not too avant-garde. There is still a strong feeling of tonality and the oboe parts are not that challenging technically. It may have been the particular pieces, but the music I played by Maurice Ravel and Claude Debussy was much more challenging. I do not want to state that the Dutch oboists could not play difficult music. But the music shows their strengths, and those strengths lay more in lyrical expression than in virtuosity.

By playing this piece of music I found out that Dutch music suits me. Although it was completely new to me, I could decide fairly quickly how to play it. I felt it came naturally to me. When I compare it to practicing music from Ravel or Brahms, I have to work much harder with the 'foreign' music to find the correct interpretation. I cannot generalise of course. There might be Dutch music that does not suit me or non-Dutch music that does, but I remember that the Dutch music I have played before I always found to be very comfortable to play and not that difficult musically.

⁷⁸ Van den Sigtenhorst Meyer, *Sonatine* op.34, "Ritornello".

⁷⁹ E.g. Henk Badings; *Symfonische Proloog*, Johan Wagenaar; *Elverhöi*, Leo Smit; *Schemselnihar*, Hendrik Andriessen; *Balade*, for oboe and piano, Alexander Voormolen; *Pastorale*, for oboe and piano, Bernhard van den Sigtenhorst Meyer; *Drie Landelijke Miniaturen* op.24, for oboe solo.

6. Conclusion

The main technical characteristics of the Dutch oboe school are its reeds and the implementing of the singing techniques.

The reeds of the Dutch oboe school were about 8 mm wide. This is wider than the reeds most oboists make now. The staples used in the Dutch oboe school were 42 mm, which is shorter than the 45-47 mm staples most oboists use now. The cane used in Dutch-school reeds were just under a millimetre thick, 0,8-0,9 mm. Again, this differs significantly from the thickness most oboists currently use. My copies of reeds in this style have little resistance once they start to make some noise and they are especially easy to play in the lower register. Because there is little resistance the oboist does not have to strain with the embouchure, which allows him/her to sing more on his instrument.

The singing techniques Jaap Stotijn implemented in his playing are the use of breath support and the approach to the oboe being an extension of the body, or rather the body being part of the instrument. Breath support is a common technique among wind players now, but at the beginning of the 20th century, it was a new technique in the Netherlands. It allowed the player to play in an easier and more relaxed way. In combination with the use of the body as extra resonance for the instrument, Jaap Stotijn was able to create the light, singing sound for which he was famous.

The sound of Jaap Stotijn is thin to our modern ears, but compared to players of his own time it fits in perfectly. By that I mean that all the recordings of oboists from the beginning of the 20th century I have listened to sound thin. And the sound of Jaap Stotijn is actually round compared to a few of the recordings I have heard. Jaap Stotijn played with ease and he made very lyrical lines. Jaap Stotijn had the roundness and robustness of the German style, but added some lightness to it. The style of playing is in between the French and German style. I found that the style of Jaap Stotijn was focused more on expression than technical perfection. The music written for him offers a lot of possibilities to be expressive. He was a virtuosic player, but not in the way of playing many notes, more in the way of showing off.

By playing a piece written by a Dutch composer in the first half of the 20th century I know now this style of music suits me. I found that the music came to me naturally and I enjoyed playing it. It is a style with some freedom, but without all the avant-garde techniques. There were quite a few pieces of music written for Jaap Stotijn so I think I will have enough inspiration for the coming years. For this project I started looking into the oboe concerto by Alexander Voormolen, but it is not published anymore and I did not have enough knowledge of the piece to decide what to play from the manuscript. When I am back in the Netherlands I want to go back to the manuscript and see whether I can play from it. If not, perhaps I can find someone who has an old edition.

From my reed experiment I want to take a few things further. I want to make my scrape slightly longer if I have to play a lot of soft low notes. This will make it easier to let them speak. Together with a longer scrape I want to see if I can shape my scrape differently. I want to experiment with leaving more cane in the back of the scrape and making the tip even thinner. The thickness of the cane of the Dutch reeds made me think about experimenting with slightly thicker cane for my own reeds, maybe 0,58-0,60 mm thick. I want to know what difference it makes to the sound and the response. I already use a relative wide shape if I compare my reeds to the reeds of my colleagues. I do not think an even wider shape will improve my reeds.

I hope that by looking into the Dutch oboe school I can find my place in the world. I definitely know now where I come from.

Appendix 1

List of compositions written for or dedicated to Jaap Stotijn

I was able to make this list with the help of the catalogue of the library of the Dutch Music Institute. It is probably not complete. In *Even uitblazen* Jaap Stotijn mentions a few composers who wrote music for him. Three of those composers were not listed in the catalogue with music written for Jaap Stotijn. Those composers were Sem Dresden, Johan Wagenaar and Cor de Groot.⁸⁰

Andriessen, Henrik	<i>Ballade</i>	Oboe and Piano
Dalen, Hugo van	<i>Bouquet Russe</i>	Oboe and Piano
	<i>Romance</i>	Oboe and Piano
Schouwman, Hans	<i>Oud-Nederlandse kerstliederen</i> , op.6	Oboe, Harp and Voice
Sigtenhorst Meyer, Bernhard van den	<i>Liederen van de Nijl</i> , op.44	Oboe and Soprano
	<i>Drie Landelijke Miniaturen</i> , op. 24	Oboe solo
	<i>Sonatine</i> , op. 34	Oboe solo
Voormolen, Alexander	<i>Concerto per oboe ed orchestra</i>	Oboe and Orchestra
	<i>Concerto per due oboi e orchestra</i>	2 Oboes and Orchestra
Wildschut, Clara	<i>Sonatine nr. 1</i>	Oboe and Piano

⁸⁰ Stotijn, *Even uitblazen*, 19.

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List of illustrations

1. A tube of cane. Own photo.
2. Split cane. Own photo.
3. Gouged and shaped cane. Own photo.
4. A tied-on reed. Own photo.
5. A staple. Own photo.
6. A finished reed. Own photo.
7. Reeds from Kurt Kalmus. Photo from book *Oboe Reed Styles* by David A. Ledet.
8. Reeds from Helmut Schlövogt. Photo from book *Oboe Reed Styles* by David A. Ledet.
9. Reed from Pierre Bajoux. Photo from book *Oboe Reed Styles* by David A. Ledet.
10. Reed from L.F.A. Bleuzet. Photo from book *Oboe Reed Styles* by David A. Ledet.
11. Reed from Jaap Stotijn. Photo from book *Oboe Reed Styles* by David A. Ledet.
12. All 7 reeds I made. Own photo.
13. Reed version 1. Own photo.
14. Reed version 2. Own photo.
15. Semi-automatic octave system on oboe d'amore made by Lorée. Own photo.
16. Automatic octave system with extra key on oboe made by Lorée. Own photo.
17. Automatic octave system on cor anglais made by Lorée. Own photo.