

# Portraits for Two Bass Clarinets (1995)

by Gord Sellar

## About this piece:

*Portraits For Two Bass Clarinets* (1995) was a piece I composed at the midpoint in my formal music studies at the University of Saskatchewan. It was written on a commission by my friend Lana Fribance, who wanted something unusual to play at a mandatory recital, and first performed by Lana and our mutual friends Susan Clarke, who was also the copyist for the original manuscript of the piece, which I have updated in digital form (with the help of the application Musescore).

Each movement is intended to be a portrait of an individual. The first movement, “Grace,” treats the infamously wonderful Grace Yip, an outstanding piano major who was known for off-the-cuff exclamations and cusses, and occasional, well-timed production of other, more amusing aural bombardments. The movement’s angular lines and offbeat outbursts are a tribute to Grace’s straightforwardness and energy, as well as imitation of her conversational style as contrasted with my own plodding approach. Grace was an important and close friend during my years studying music, and premiered at least one of my favorite pieces, so there was no question in my mind that one of the movements ought to be a tribute to her.

The second movement, “Jamie,” is an attempt to set to music some of the quiet, persistent kindness and thoughtfulness of another piano major friend of mine—a friend since high school, indeed—named Jamie Shupena. It strikes me as a little repetitive now, and its harmonic simplicity fails to embody Jamie’s own complex personality, but still, the mood seems to approach the Jamie I knew.

Finally, “Mo,” the subject of the third movement, was my attempt to capture some of the personality of Maurice Lineman, a voice major who was constantly demonstrating the outer limits of his vocal range, and good-naturedly bouncing in and out of conversations during those afternoon hours spent in the cafeteria of the basement of the Education Building, which housed the Music Department in those days.

## **Technical notes:**

The final movement uses two unconventional notations:

- One is a multiphonic, where the upper pitch is sung by the clarinetist. The pitch notated is just a suggestion: the performer may sing a pitch within his or her own range, and to his or her preference, though the effect ought to be less consonant and more dissonant if possible.
- The other is a fingering indication for an altissimo note. Performers who cannot play this top tone, or who find the suggested fingering does not work for them, are urged to consult one of several recent texts outlining upper-register fingerings and techniques. (Sometimes, an alternate altissimo fingering works better for a given player or on a particular model of instrument.)

## **Rights, contact information, etc:**

This piece has only been performed in public once or twice. However, a recording of the premiere is available online, here:

<http://www.gordsellar.com/music/>

While I retain copyright for the piece, anyone who wishes may download, print, and perform this score in a not-for-profit capacity: all I ask is that you make a recording available to me for my own archives. (In the highly unlikely event that someone wishes to use this music in a commercial capacity, contact me at [gordsellar@gmail.com](mailto:gordsellar@gmail.com) and we'll hammer something out.)

# Portraits for Two Bass Clarinets

## Movement 1: Grace

Gord Sellar

Lightly, semi-staccato, ♩=94

Bass Clarinet

*mf*

Bass Clarinet

*mf*

B. Cl.

B. Cl.

B. Cl.

B. Cl.

B. Cl.

B. Cl.

14 B. Cl. *trun trun*  
*ff* *mp*

B. Cl. *ff* *sfz* *sfz* *sfz* *sfz*

18 B. Cl. *f* *fff* *mf*

B. Cl. *sfz* *sfz* *sfz* *fff* *f*

21 B. Cl. *f* *trun*

B. Cl. *f*

24 B. Cl. *mf*

B. Cl. *mf*

27 B. Cl. *sfz* <

B. Cl.

31 *trance* *trance*

B. Cl. *mp* *mp* *mf*

B. Cl. *sfz* *sfz* *mf*

35 *mp* *mf*

B. Cl. *mf*

38 *f* *ff*

B. Cl. *f* *ff* 3

42 *mf*

B. Cl. *mf*

45

B. Cl.

B. Cl.

48

B. Cl.

B. Cl.

50

B. Cl.

B. Cl.

*f*

*mf*

*f*

*sfz*

53

B. Cl.

B. Cl.

*f*

*mf*

*f*

56

B. Cl.

B. Cl.

*sfz*

*sfz*

# Portraits for Two Bass Clarinets

## Movement 2: Jamie

Gord Sellar

**Slowly, cantabile**

Bass Clarinet

*mp*

Bass Clarinet

*mf*

*mf*

B. Cl.

B. Cl.

*f*

*f*

A

7

B. Cl.

B. Cl.

Fine

This image shows measures 7 and 8 of a musical score for two B. Cl. parts. Measure 7 features a complex melodic line in the upper B. Cl. part, starting with a quarter note G4, followed by eighth notes A4, B4, C5, D5, E5, F5, and G5, then descending through F5, E5, D5, C5, B4, A4, and G4. The lower B. Cl. part plays a simple harmonic accompaniment with quarter notes G3, A3, B3, and C4. Measure 8 continues the melodic line in the upper B. Cl. part, starting with a quarter note G4, followed by eighth notes A4, B4, C5, D5, E5, F5, and G5, then descending through F5, E5, D5, C5, B4, A4, and G4. The lower B. Cl. part plays a simple harmonic accompaniment with quarter notes G3, A3, B3, and C4. The word 'Fine' is written above the upper B. Cl. part at the end of measure 8.

10

B. Cl.

B. Cl.

*ff*

*ff*

13

B. Cl. *mp* *mf*

B. Cl. *mf* *mp*



B. Cl. 17 B

B. Cl. *f* *mp*

B. Cl. *mf* *mp*

B. Cl. 21 *mf*

B. Cl. *mf*

B. Cl. 24

B. Cl. *f*

B. Cl. *f*

D.S. al Fine

The musical score is for two B. Cl. parts. It consists of five systems of staves. The first system (measures 17-18) has a section labeled 'B' above it. The first staff starts with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. The second staff starts with a bass clef. The first system includes dynamic markings *f* and *mp* for the first staff, and *mf* and *mp* for the second staff. The second system (measures 19-20) includes a *mf* marking for the first staff and a *mf* marking for the second staff. The third system (measures 21-22) includes a *mf* marking for the first staff. The fourth system (measures 23-24) includes a *f* marking for the first staff. The fifth system (measures 25-26) includes a *f* marking for the first staff. The sixth system (measures 27-28) includes a *f* marking for the first staff. The seventh system (measures 29-30) includes a *f* marking for the first staff. The score ends with a double bar line and the instruction 'D.S. al Fine'.

# Portraits for Two Bass Clarinets

## Movement 3: Mo

Gord Sellar

Moderately, with humor

(multiphonic: sing upper note)

Bass Clarinet

Bass Clarinet

B. Cl.

B. Cl.

B. Cl.

B. Cl.

*mf*

*ff*

*mf*

*mp*

*mp*

19 B. Cl. *f* *ff*

B. Cl. *f* *ff*

25 B. Cl. *fff* *sfz* *ff*

B. Cl. *fff* *f* *ff*