

Letter to the Editor

Dear Dan,

My article "Italian Baroque Ornamentation: Taking into account the Baroque Oboe" published in this journal Vol. 23, No. 2 clearly touched several nerves for Gonzalo Xavier Ruiz. Inexplicably, Mr. Ruiz seems to have missed the purpose and intent of my article, clearly stated in the opening paragraph that the article will explore "both the limitations of and possibilities for ornamentation on the baroque oboe, which can then be applied to the modern oboe in an effort to create more authentic ornamentation" (p. 91). More the pity, since Mr. Ruiz's mis-reading allows him to go on at length jousting with straw men. Ultimately in his rush to defend the Baroque oboe by an ad hominem attack, Mr. Ruiz does himself a disservice.

My article is in no way a criticism of the baroque oboe. Every instrument has its flaws. One only has to look at the modern oboe to find examples. Much of what we do to make the instrument better, be it improving intonation or making fingerings easier to play, has a consequence which we either learn to live with or continue to try to improve. Modern oboists learn to overcome the difficulties of the instrument, rising above them to make beautiful music. This is also true of the baroque oboe. There are many things about the baroque oboe that, in fact, make it easier to play than the modern oboe. Generally speaking, fingering choices are fewer on the baroque oboe and that can lead to an easier if not faster technique. I also find fast articulation much easier on the baroque oboe. Of course there are accomplished baroque oboe players who successfully minimize the tone quality change on the cross-fingerings, overcome most difficult fingering combinations, and leap easily from octave to octave, but that is not to downplay the difficulty and the existence of these difficulties. When ornamenting, good players find ways around the difficulties of an instrument—that is the point of the first section of my article.

Further, Mr. Ruiz completely misleads readers in his assertion that I imply that biting is an acceptable method for playing the baroque oboe or any double reed instrument. I am a strong believer in using the most relaxed embouchure possible. My students would tell you that one of the first things I look for and fix in them is an embouchure that uses biting. The tightening, and I

believe that I use the words slight tightening, comes for me from bringing in the corners of my month very very slightly. Perhaps I should simply have said by intensifying the air stream since an embouchure change is for me so slight. Dr. Ewell's article, to which Mr. Ruiz refers the reader several times, is of course an excellent source for discussing breathing and blowing issues on any double reed instrument.

Mr. Ruiz states that I "have missed the salient feature of Italian Ornamentation: that it must be improvised." Aside from stating the obvious, he appears to see no value in providing pedagogical instruction to those wanting to learn Italian ornamentation through modeling. Mr. Ruiz's solution to Italian ornamentation seems to be-play as virtuosically as me. Well enough, but again he misses the point of the article: to help those playing modern oboes historically inform their performances.

Finally, the readership of the IDRS are also the authors of articles which appear in *The Double Reed*. If a specialist's response to serious work is ad hominem attacks and dyspeptic invective, then truly all of us in the profession are poorer for it.

Sincerely,
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Rebecca Kemper Scarnati joined the faculty at Northern Arizona University in 1991 where she teaches oboe, chamber music, and music theory. Dr. Scarnati is principal oboist of the Flagstaff Symphony, and oboist for the Kokopelli Quintet. She earned her doctor of musical arts degree from University of Arizona and both her bachelor and master of music degrees and the performer's certificate in oboe from Indiana University. Her principal teachers have included Jerry Sirucek of Indiana University and John Mack of the Cleveland Orchestra. She performs with the Desert Foothills Music Fest in Carefree, the Flagstaff Festival of the Arts, the Wagner Festival Orchestra (Arizona Opera), and the Desert Symphony (Palm Springs). She has been principal oboist with the Binghamton Symphony, Tri-Cities Opera, Corning Philharmonic, and Elmira Symphony and has performed with the Spoleto Festival Orchestra, Evansville Philharmonic, Owensboro Symphony, Wheeling Symphony, and Chautauqua Festival Orchestra. Touring for three years in the United States and Europe as the oboist with the Con Spirito Woodwind Quintet, based in Pittsburgh, she has also been a faculty member at the State University of New York at Binghamton, Ohio University, Indiana University, and the Symphony School of America.