

“At Home with Hawkins” — conversations on music and clarinet

by Jarrett Hoffman



In almost every interview with a musician, there's some special piece of conversation that later falls flat when put on a page. For those elusive moments — some inflection of voice, some bit of body language, or a laugh that's nice and genuine — you can't beat long-form interviews captured on video.

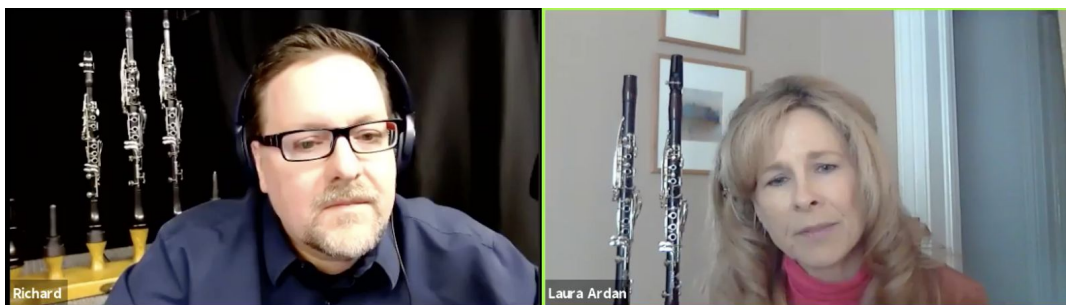
And when the interviewer and guest share a warm chemistry, and both are musicians at the top of their field, the result is a conversation that gives off a special sense of human connection and more nuggets of wisdom than you can count.

That's what Oberlin Conservatory clarinet professor Richard Hawkins has captured in his new series of interviews, “At Home with Hawkins.” Episodes stream live on Facebook, some on the page of [Backun Musical Services](#), others on [Clarineat: The Clarinet Podcast](#).

Hawkins' guests so far have included [David Shifrin](#) (professor of clarinet, Yale School of Music), [Laura Ardan](#) (principal clarinet, Atlanta Symphony), and [Anthony McGill](#) (principal clarinet, New York Philharmonic). At this point, you've probably gathered which instrument they all play, but the majority of topics they cover are applicable to any musician or fan of music. (Click the link on each player's name to access that episode.)

Naturally, different subjects come up for different players and their different careers. McGill can talk about a change that was a shock to his system: going from the pit of the Metropolitan Opera to the bright-lit stage of the New York Philharmonic. Shifrin can tap into his extensive experience commissioning music as a soloist, chamber

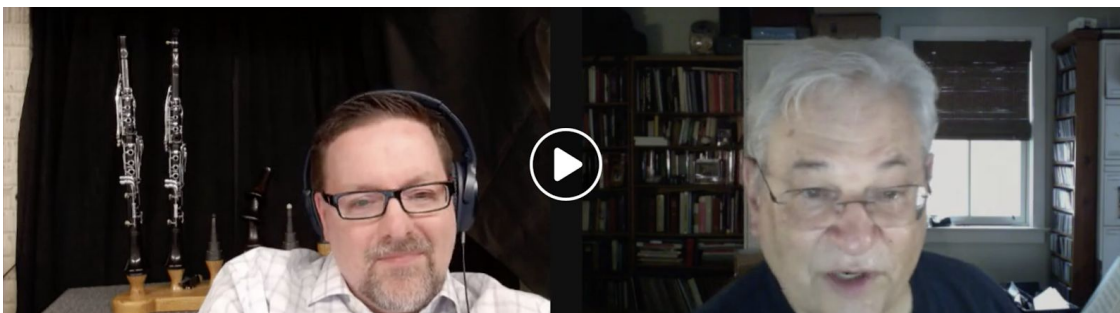
musician, and artistic director. Ardan can discuss playing under several different music directors during her long tenure in Atlanta (including, of particular interest to Cleveland audiences, Robert Shaw).



There are also a few questions to which Hawkins likes to return across separate interviews. On the topic of performance anxiety, we hear how McGill builds himself up before going onstage, and how Ardan creates a protective bubble around herself. We hear about personal discoveries related to air, intonation, and performance in general. We hear musical advice, and what each of them looks for in a student — including the ability to communicate through music, even when under pressure.

These are conversations that make you wiser and more energized for having listened to them. As Shifrin tells Hawkins, “We need terrific things like this that enlighten us during these dark times.” Perhaps more importantly, they’ll make you smile. After listening, you’ll feel like you’ve just had the chance to sit down and chat with these iconic players and teachers who are also kind and inspiring people.

Watch the [Backun](#) and [Clarineat](#) Facebook pages for forthcoming episodes — including Hawkins’ interview with Boris Allakhverdyan (principal clarinet, Los Angeles Philharmonic) on Wednesday, May 20.



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