



Interview Article

An interview with Pamela Shuler and company (Sidney Shuler, Richard Schwartz, Emily A. Salgado, and Kayla Liechty)

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Educational Studies at Eastern New Mexico University in Portales, New Mexico USA

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Abstract

In this interview, Dr. Pam Shuler, a clarinetist and Assistant Professor of Music at Eastern New Mexico University, discusses her passion for American clarinet music. Dr. Shuler, alongside her husband Dr. Sidney Shuler and colleagues Dr. Richard Schwartz, Dr. Emily Salgado, and Kayla Liechty, shares insights into their musical backgrounds, collaborative efforts, and performances that highlight American composers.

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Introduction

Recently Dr. Pam Shuler led a magnificent number of colleagues in a tribute to the American clarinet and performed several pieces of music honoring a number of composers and showcasing a number of her colleagues in this endeavor. In this interview, Dr. Pam Shuler is interviewed along with her husband Dr. Sidney Shuler and Dr. Richard Schwartz and Dr. Emily Salgado and Kayla Liechty. Each member of this ensemble comments on the music as well as the collaborative effort honoring the American music for the clarinet.

Michael F. Shaughnessy: *Dr. Shuler can you tell us a bit about your education, experience and what got you involved in music?*

Pamela Shuler: I hold an undergraduate degree in Music Education from Youngstown State University and a Master of Music Degree and a Doctor of Music Arts Degree in Clarinet Performance and Literature from the University of Illinois. I am currently working as an Assistant Professor of Music at Eastern New Mexico University, teaching clarinet.

I first got involved with music as a young child through participation in youth and hand bell choirs at the church I attended. This grew into joining band and choir during my fourth-grade year of school. Through my experiences in lessons with a private clarinet teacher and activities for high school band, I decided to pursue a path in music. I was fortunate enough to work with outstanding teachers who helped show me different career options and encouraged me to take steps forward in the music profession.

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Michael F. Shaughnessy: *Dr. Shuler- what got you involved in American music for the clarinet?*

Pamela Shuler: At the time I was attending my undergraduate degree program, the Music History classes I took focused primarily on the Western European music tradition. While private lessons allowed me to explore a wider diversity of repertoire for clarinet, it was not until I started my graduate studies that I really began discovering a rich list of composers of different nationalities and compositional styles.

For my doctoral project, I explored music commissioned by clarinetist Benny Goodman for chamber ensemble. While many recognize Goodman as the “King of Swing” and for the leadership of his jazz-based ensemble, Goodman also commissioned a number of works that would fit into the genre of classical music. While Goodman worked with composers of various nationalities, exploration of this topic led me to seek out additional works commissioned by American clarinetists and written by American composers. Over the years, as I have attended various lectures, performances, and recitals, I have continued to add to my personal collection of pieces by American composers.

In exploring this repertoire, I came to realize the diversity and magnitude of clarinet music written by American composers. This experience has also led to the path of commissioning new works for clarinet and trumpet with my colleague and husband, Dr. Sidney Shuler. At the moment, we are involved in a project of commissioning a new work for clarinet and trumpet each year. We are hopeful that through this project we will provide an opportunity for composers to explore the unique combination of clarinet and trumpet and create new works for performers to explore. Currently, the four pieces we have commissioned have all been written by American composers.

Michael F. Shaughnessy: *Dr. Shuler- how did you come about organizing an entire evening for the American music for the clarinet? And what were the pieces you were involved in?*

Pamela Shuler: I have recently come to the habit of trying to select a theme or common thread for music I select for a recital program. There is so much quality music out there, it can be difficult to pare down repertoire to accommodate the time constraints of a single performance. For this recital, when I was looking at the stack of music on my desk, I noticed that many of the works were by American composers. In thinking about that as a theme, I realized how diverse of a program, both in terms of instrumentation and style, could be offered by selecting music written within the last one hundred years by American composers. In the below list of works, the composers themselves state that their inspirations come from a variety of sources, including jazz, marches, piano bar music, rock, and American film.

For this recital, the pieces performed were *Sonata for Clarinet and Piano* by Leonard Bernstein, *Pastorale (Souvenirs du Frög)* by Daniel Dorff, *Promenade (Walking the Dog)* by George Gershwin, *Impromptu* by William A.R. May, *Concoction* by Franklin Piland, *Gamin* by William Grant Still, and *Music for Two* by Judith Lang Zaimont.

Many of these works also provided an opportunity for collaboration with colleagues. In addition to working with pianist Ms. Kayla Liechty, I also performed with percussionist Dr. Emily Salgado, saxophonist Dr. Richard Schwartz, and trumpeter Dr. Sidney Shuler. While there are numerous pieces for clarinet alone and for clarinet and piano by American composers, I enjoyed the process of exploring chamber works that feature the clarinet with my colleagues.

Michael F. Shaughnessy: *Now Dr. Sidney Shuler— please tell us a bit about your education, training and experience please.*

Sidney Shuler: I earned a Bachelor of Music in Education degree from Youngstown State University (YSU) in Youngstown, Ohio. While working on this degree, I had the pleasure of attending the Aspen Music Festival and School in Aspen, Colorado. Additionally, I earned a position with the American Wind Symphony Orchestra, and was a substitute musician with the Youngstown Symphony Orchestra, Warren Philharmonic Orchestra, and WD Packard Concert Band. Following my graduation from YSU, I attended the University of Illinois as a graduate assistant with the famed University of Illinois Bands. As a graduate assistant, I worked with the Marching Illini, Illinois Basketball Band, and several of the concert bands at the University.

Following graduation with a master’s degree in trumpet performance, I taught at Paris High School in Paris, Illinois. I was the Band Director, Chamber Ensembles Director, Pit Orchestra Director, and Fine Arts Coordinator. Eventually,

I decided I would like to return to school to earn my doctorate. It seemed a good situation to return to Illinois, so I applied and was fortunate enough to be offered another assistantship, this time with the Krannert Center for the Arts on campus. I was able to meet several internationally known musicians and learn about the arts entertainment business as well. During all of this time, I had earned positions with the Danville Symphony Orchestra, Peoria Symphony Orchestra, and Illinois Symphony Orchestras.

Following graduation, I was offered a position at Chadron State College in Nebraska. I was able to teach all the brass instruments at this time in addition to conducting all of the athletic and symphonic ensembles.

When I was offered the position at Eastern New Mexico University, I was excited to have the needs of the University so closely align with my education, interests, and experience. Since being here, I have been able to interface with many orchestras in the state and region while maintaining a large private studio of trumpets here at ENMU.

Michael F. Shaughnessy: *Now you collaborated on a piece entitled Concoction by Franklin Piland- with movements entitled “Black,” “Nitro” and “Americano”- Your instrument is the trumpet. How did your collaboration with your wife Dr. Pam Shuler go?*

Sidney Shuler: Dr. Pam Shuler and I have been working on a long-term project of commissioning several new works for clarinet, trumpet, and piano. Our first work, *Day Trips*, by Dr. BJ Brooks, was for clarinet and trumpet in 2020. This experience gave us a bit of insight into what might come next in this project. So far, we have commissioned four new works. We are always looking for composers to involve in this project and intend to record all of the commissions at some future point.

Clarinet and trumpet, while relatives, are acoustically very challenging to pair. Each of our commissions have treated the pairing slightly differently. This, honestly, is exactly how we had hoped it would go. Many times, this pairing is neglected due to the stark acoustic differential, but the instruments are quite similar in many other ways. Also, working with your spouse is healthy on many levels. As colleagues, we tend to bounce ideas off each other in terms of musical inquiries, but also in regard to teaching because we respect each other so much in both areas.

As spouses, we are uniquely positioned to follow through with this commissioning project because we share finances and have purposefully set aside money each year for this exact reason. This would be far different if we were not married and had to pool finances for this project.

Michael F. Shaughnessy: *Dr. Schwartz, please tell us a little bit about yourself, your background, and your instrument - the saxophone"*

Richard Schwartz: I grew up in southern New Jersey (South Jersey) enjoying video games, BMX bicycles, and music. I frequently sang and played the piano, clarinet, guitar, electric bass, and saxophone. While in high school, I participated in band, jazz ensemble, marching band, choir, theater, and other endeavors. While pursuing a Bachelor of Music in Music Education at Temple University in Philadelphia, PA I began to perform and teach music professionally. While pursuing and achieving a Master of Music in Performance (Saxophone) at the University of Michigan I was surrounded by a multitude of highly talented and driven individuals. Being in such an environment fueled my sense of purpose on saxophone and eventually I attended and graduated from Boston University with a Doctor of Musical Arts (Woodwind Performance).

I have served higher education - in a variety of capacities - for twenty-five years and have performed saxophone in North and South America and Europe in a variety of manners including musical theater productions, in concert with well-known artists, for private events, in recital, etc. I enjoy performing in the classical, jazz, and rock genres and have two albums released through the Centaur and SONY labels.

Michael F. Shaughnessy: *"Now Dr. Schwartz- Music for Two by Judith Lang Zaimont- you were challenged in this piece with 5 movements- “Fanfare,” “Slow,” “Very Slow,” “Gavotte” and then “As Fast as Possible.” What were the challenges here?"*

Richard Schwartz: Music for Two is, indeed, an intriguing and challenging work. There are rhythmic complexities and subtle changes that need to be investigated and practiced in the “Fanfare,” “Gavotte,” and “As Fast as Possible” movements. Additionally, the “Slow” and “Very Slow” movements can truly wear on one’s embouchure. I enjoy the cyclical approach to the composition - material introduced in the first movement returns in later movements. I also like the concept and use of a somewhat modern Gavotte – a French dance with Baroque origins - in this work. Very creative and I am thankful Zaimont arranged the work to be performed by a variety of instruments as a duet.

Michael F. Shaughnessy: *Dr. Salgado-first can you tell us about your education and experience with music?*

Emily A. Salgado: I grew up in Asheville, NC and started playing percussion when I was in 6th grade. Music has always been a big part of my life with my grandfather being a drummer himself and a lover of all things jazz. My mom also sang in the church choir and played piano, so it was a no brainer that I would go into something music related. I did not know I wanted to be a teacher until I was going into my sophomore year of undergrad at Furman University where I received a Bachelor’s in Music Education. My mom was a kindergarten teacher for over 30 years, so I was exposed to high level teaching from a very young age.

After I graduated from Furman, I immediately went to the Florida State University and graduated with my Master’s in Music Performance. During my two years in Tallahassee, I performed with several school of music ensembles, but I was also given the opportunity to perform with the professional orchestral in town, the Tallahassee Symphony. I then continued on to Ann Arbor, MI where I received my Doctor of Music Arts from the University of Michigan. My first year, I premiered a double percussion concerto with the National Chinese Orchestra Taiwan and will be traveling to Taiwan this upcoming summer to premiere that same piece.

The summer of my last year at U of M, I was offered the adjunct percussion professor position at the University of Oklahoma in Norman, OK where I stayed for one year. I was then offered the position at ENMU and have been here since, currently in my second year. Outside of percussion, I also have a strong background in the marching arts, specific marching and teaching drum corps. I marched with the Carolina Crown Drum and Bugle Corps in 2015/16 as one of their conductors and have been on staff with them since I aged out. I have also taught several drum major camps throughout the country along with judging both percussion and drum at different marching festivals.

Michael F. Shaughnessy: *Dr. Salgado- you performed a piece with Dr. Shuler entitled Impromptu by William A.R. May- tell us about the piece and what instrument you played to accompany Dr. Shuler.*

Emily A. Salgado: Bill May’s piece Impromptu is a duet between the clarinet and 5 octave marimba. Set in an ABA musical form, it allows for the listener to be taken on a fast and easy to follow journey. The intertwining rhythms at the beginning of the A section create an immediate, forward energy to the piece coupled unique groove within the 7/16 time signature. This continues until the B section where each part takes its own musical role to create a more laid back, almost halftime feeling groove. The marimba can be heard as more of the rhythm section of a jazz band while the clarinet holds more of the soloist role. The piece ends in a similar way it began going back to the 7/16 motive with a technically challenging and virtuosic closing section. Overall, it was a joy to perform this piece with Pam and we look forward to giving more performances of the work in the future.

Michael F. Shaughnessy: *Kayla, in which pieces did you collaborate with Pam Shuler?*

Kayla Liechty: I performed with her on the following pieces: Daniel Dorff’s Souvenirs du Frog, Leonard Bernstein’s Sonata, William Grant Still’s Gamin, George Gershwin’s Promenade (Walking the Dog), and three movements of Franklin Piland’s Concoction

Michael F. Shaughnessy: *How did you prepare for this recital and how difficult was your preparation?*

Kayla Liechty: Collaborating with other musicians is my passion. For some, taking the stage as a soloist is most rewarding, but, for me, joining another person in music making is so rewarding.

When Pam first reached out to me about a possible collaboration, I was excited at the thoughtfulness she had given to programming her repertoire. Some musicians either choose their favorite pieces (a valid option) or choose pieces that might not have a thematic thread. Pam chose this repertoire of American music for clarinet, and it made for a very strong program.

For the collaborative process between piano and another instrument or voice, the process begins with each performer studying the musical score first – unless there is a big time crunch, and sight reading skills are necessary for quick preparation. I always appreciate working with Pam because, in addition to being a superlative, virtuosic musician, she prepares well and shares that preparation with her collaborators. When she invited me to collaborate with her, she sent me musical scores to peruse and representative recordings to which I could refer. Honestly, I don't tend to spend much time listening to recordings in my preparation of collaborative music.

I will give it a listen at the start to get a quick snapshot of the piece, but mostly prefer to dive into the music at the piano and see for myself what the composer is saying to me as a performer. So, most of my preparation time is at the piano with the score.

My score study at the piano includes observing the form (roadmap) of the piece, in which I look for repetitive material, which allows me to maximize my practice time. I also look for passages or pitches that are difficult to read, making notes in the score that help me read it more easily. Maybe I add a chord symbol or the letter name of a pitch, or perhaps I add an accidental. That is all a part of my score study.

I also take note of the tempo – or speed – of the music, as it often changes throughout movements of pieces. I work with the metronome from the start if the music is at a slow or moderate tempo and, if the piece is fast and difficult, I begin practicing it slowly, gradually increasing to the marked tempo. All this and more is my personal practice in the weeks (or month) leading up to my first rehearsal with Pam.

In my first rehearsal with Pam, I can take it to the bank that she will come equally – likely better – prepared than I. This helps our first rehearsal go quite smoothly. With my preparation in hand, I am highly attuned in these first run-throughs to observing the tempo modifications she might make that aren't in the score (or the nuances she uses for the marked tempo indications), dynamic intricacies and other musical characteristics. These rehearsals are so much fun because our two individual parts are becoming one. While we will make direct eye contact often at the start of movements or after long pauses in the music, most of our visual communication is peripheral and, actually, we rely heavily upon listening to one another. This collaborative musical process is such a joy for me, and it doesn't get much better than sharing it with Pam Shuler!

Biodata of Author and Interviewees



Prof. Dr. **Michael F. Shaughnessy** is currently Professor of Educational Studies at Eastern New Mexico University in Portales, New Mexico USA. He has served as Editor in Chief of Gifted Education International and can be reached electronically at Michael.Shaughnessy@enmu.edu. ORCID: 0000 0002 1877 1319. His current research interests include talent development and intellectual assessment as well as the role of personality in giftedness, talent and creativity.



Dr. **Pamela Shuler**, originally from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, is currently serving as the Clarinet Instructor at Eastern New Mexico University. At ENMU Dr. Shuler teaches applied clarinet lessons, directs the clarinet choir, and has taught music theory, music appreciation, and freshman seminar courses. As a performer, Dr. Shuler has been heard throughout the United States, in Spain, and Japan. She has performed with the Southwest Symphony Orchestra, Champaign Urbana Symphony Orchestra, Sinfonia da Camera, the Concert Band of Central Illinois, and the American Wind Symphony Orchestra. Having served as a K thru 12 educator for a number of years, Dr. Shuler is passionate about working with students at all phases of clarinet mastery and enjoys serving as an active clinician and adjudicator for high school and middle school students. Dr. Shuler holds a Bachelor of Music in Education from Youngstown State University, and a Master of Music and Doctor of Musical Arts Degrees from the University of Illinois. Her principal teachers have included Joseph Edwards, Robert Fitzer, and J. David Harris. Shuler lives in Portales, New Mexico with her daughters Eleanor and Beatrice and husband Sidney, who is also on

faculty at ENMU. Research interests of Dr. Shuler include the classical chamber commissions of Benny Goodman and performing new works for the clarinet and chamber ensembles. Composer Mike Curtis stated that Shuler's recent performance of one of his chamber works was, Very well done! As a member of the Proha Clarinet Quartet, Shuler was invited to perform at the 2008 and 2009 Vandoren Clarinet Chamber Festivals. E-mail: pamela.shuler@enmu.edu (Web 1)



Grammy considered saxophonist Dr. **Richard A. Schwartz** has commissioned and or premiered nearly thirty new works for saxophone, performed for regional, national and international events in North and South America and Europe and is the grand prize winner of the 1997 International Henri Mancini Institute Concerto Competition and recipient of the 2010 Southeastern Louisiana University Presidents Award for Excellence in Artistic Activity. After performing the Boston premiere of Jan Curtis Transformations for voice, piano, and alto saxophone in Jordan Hall, The Boston Globe declared, Richard Schwartz displayed extraordinary talent on the saxophone, sympathetically mirroring the voice and contributing

his own improvisatory imagination. Awarded three United States patents, Schwartz founded the music publication company SilverKeyMusic.com authoring the internationally recognized intonation tool The Tuning C.D. and many instructional guides in music education. His research interests include saxophone performance and pedagogy, jazz ensemble pedagogy, jazz history, jazz improvisation, jazz composition, musical intonation, advanced woodwind techniques including multi-phonic, circular breathing, double-tonguing, the altissimo register, and more, entrepreneurialism in music, sight-reading techniques, recruitment techniques and more. Email: richard.schwartz@enmu.edu (Web 2)

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Photo of Richard A. Schwartz web link <https://www.enmu.edu/about/news-and-events/enmu-news/academic-news/2975-enmu-professor-releases-album-featuring-jazz-legend-ellis-marsalis>

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