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**THE INFLUENCE OF JAZZ ELEMENTS ON  
EDISON DENISOV'S  
*SONATA FOR ALTO SAXOPHONE AND PIANO***

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**THE INFLUENCE OF JAZZ ELEMENTS ON  
EDISON DENISOV'S  
*SONATA FOR ALTO SAXOPHONE AND PIANO***

**by**

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**Treatise**

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of the Requirements  
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## **Dedication**

To my loving wife Tara, my daughter Hailey and my mother Dorothy, with thanks and love.



## **Acknowledgements**

I would like to thank the following people, without whom this treatise could not have been written: Harvey Pittel, for showing me the path to true musicianship and for serving as the model for the highest standard of artistry. To my friend and teacher, Jeffrey Hellmer, for your inspiration and friendship. You exemplify the idea of the complete musician and teacher. John Mills for your outstanding leadership professionalism and invaluable assistance with this work. I would also like to thank my family for your support--particularly my wife, Tara, my daughter Hailey and my mother Dorothy, to whom this work is dedicated. I would like to extend special thanks to my colleagues and students at The University of Tennessee. Their patience, support, and encouragement have been a testament to their friendship. And finally, I would like to thank Leduc publishing for granting permission to reproduce the music example found in this treatise.

**THE INFLUENCE OF JAZZ ELEMENTS ON  
EDISON DENISOV'S  
*SONATA FOR ALTO SAXOPHONE AND PIANO***

Publication No. \_\_\_\_\_

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The University of Texas at Austin, 2004

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The purpose of this treatise is to further the saxophonist's understanding of the importance of jazz elements and their influence upon Edison Denisov's *Sonata for Alto Saxophone and Piano*. Jazz music has captivated and intrigued the world's many cultures, and the saxophone has had a close association with its development.

As the saxophone moved from the jazz club to the concert stage it lost along the way of many of the identifiable elements of its jazz heritage. Modern discussions of jazz and its influence upon the *Sonata* have either been desultory or have simply been excluded. This may stem from a performer's unfamiliarity with jazz performance practice, or their view that jazz is not of scholarly

substance. As a result, saxophonists are often acutely unaware of the nuance and substance that jazz elements lend to the overall presentation of the *Sonata for Alto Saxophone and Piano*. In order to promote more accurate performances it is important that the saxophonist become familiar with these elements.

It is the intent of this treatise to identify jazz influence, as a unifying element in the *Sonata for Alto Saxophone and Piano* by Edison Denisov (1929-1996).

The following topics are addressed, in order, to support the saxophonist in developing an understanding of the influence of jazz upon the composer and within this work: the influence of jazz music upon melody, harmony and rhythm; historical and biographical information of Edison Denisov; a discussion of jazz and its role in cold war, Soviet society; and the identification of jazz elements as they were incorporated in the *Sonata*.

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## Introduction

Throughout the years, the saxophone has had a close relationship with the development of jazz music. Despite this close association with jazz some saxophonists have little knowledge or study of performance practices found in jazz. In the past, negative views taken by scholars, critics and historians toward jazz, as well as a segment of classical saxophonists who have chosen to isolate their study to exclude popular musical influences, have resulted in the creation of the classical artist who is unfamiliar with and unable to accurately interpret jazz elements as they appear in modern literature.

On December 14, 1970, saxophonist Jean-Marie Londeix and pianist Milton Grainger premiered Edison Denisov's *Sonata for Alto Saxophone and Piano* at the second World Saxophone Congress in Chicago. For those in attendance it became clear that the *Sonata* would mark a "turning point" for the saxophone and its repertoire. Saxophonist Jean-Marie Londeix commented upon this importance, "The *Sonata for Alto Saxophone and Piano* by Edison Denisov opened the saxophone to avant-garde contemporary music in a way that no other piece had ever done."<sup>1</sup> This piece, which contains material from serial composition and contemporary effects, including the incorporation of jazz,

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<sup>1</sup> James Umble. *Jean-Marie Londeix: Master of the Modern Saxophone*. (Glenmoore: Roncorp Publications, 2000), 222.

brilliantly demonstrated the breadth and depth of the saxophone as a modern concert instrument.

Where much has been written about Edison Denisov and the *Sonata*, little has been written about the role jazz played in his life and the extent to which jazz and its elements have been used in the creation of the *Sonata for Alto Saxophone and Piano*. Denisov once wrote, “If we can observe an underlying principle, it has an objective reality, and we are therefore fully justified in investigating it and regarding it as part of the compositional process.”<sup>2</sup>

Denisov’s had an intense love of improvisational music and developed a compositional practice of using one or more unifying elements throughout the movements of a work. This combined with his pursuit of musical freedom “...achieved only through perfection.” gives cause to believe that the jazz elements presented in the *Sonata* have greater validity and purpose than have previously been documented.<sup>3</sup>

Accordingly, the intent of this investigation is to determine to what extent elements of the jazz language including: jazz harmonies, rhythmic textures, melodic contours, and timbral effects are manifested in the *Sonata for Alto Saxophone and Piano* by Edison Denisov.<sup>4</sup> Additionally, a historical and

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<sup>2</sup> Edison Denisov. “The Compositional Process,” *Tempo*, n.s. 105 (1973), 2.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>4</sup> The term “Elements of the Jazz Language” was first coined by David Baker.

analytical discussion of jazz music and the role it played in Denisov's life, as well as the underground culture of the Soviet, communist era will be included.

Chapter 1 deals with elements of the jazz language, and the jazz musician's approaches melody, rhythm, and harmony. Included is a discussion of such areas as: melodic contour, improvisatory effect upon antecedent and consequent form, blue-notes, sound figures, syncopation, timbral manipulation, swing, cross-rhythm, chord voicing, comping, and walking bass line/ostinato.

Chapter 2 will present a brief biographical sketch of Edison Denisov. From an early age, Denisov showed a flair for detailed learning. Fueled with a love of music and mathematics, Denisov would struggle to serve "two masters" until an encounter with Dmitry Shostakovich would set him upon the path of composition. This chapter will discuss the various stages of Denisov's musical development as well as his emergence as a leader of the Soviet avant-garde, despite the oppressive nature of the Soviet Central Committee.

Chapter 3 will discuss jazz in Soviet culture and the effect it had upon Edison Denisov. Since the early 1920's, with such artists as Sidney Bechet, Louis Armstrong, and Benny Goodman, jazz had permeated the iron curtain and woven itself into the fabric of Soviet society. The government's view toward western jazz was one of "'bourgeois decadence', yet "many Soviet musicians consider[ed]

modern music and jazz—both unconventional and improvisational—a precious taste of Western freedom.”<sup>5</sup>

Further discussion in this chapter will focus on Edison Denisov and his contact with jazz music. From his in-depth study of French popular culture as a teen, to his writings on jazz music in *Tempo* magazine, this chapter will show that Denisov was not only acutely aware of jazz, but recognized that “jazz has now so firmly taken root in contemporary music that this question [as to its inclusion in modern composition] is no longer open to discussion.”<sup>6</sup>

Chapter 4 will present an analysis of jazz elements as found in the *Sonata for Alto Saxophone and Piano*. Where much has been written about the *Sonata*, these discussions have focused upon the serial techniques employed within. While it is recognized, in this treatise, that the work is of a serial nature, this discussion will present the idea of jazz elements as a unifying factor in the construction and presentation of the work. Beginning with the third movement, *Allegro moderato*, a movement in which the subject of jazz has been broached by other authors, I will highlight how jazz elements have influenced areas of melody, harmony and rhythm.

Chapter 5 will draw further parallels between devices used in the third movement and the open two movements of the work. Observation will be based

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<sup>5</sup> Boris Schwarz. *Music and Music Life in Soviet Russia*. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983), 629.

<sup>6</sup> Edison Denisov. “New Music and Jazz,” *International Music Council* 10 (1968), 30.

upon observations by other scholars and artists as well as my own personal observations as a jazz and classical saxophonist.

The *Sonata* was created during a period in which Denisov not only wrote a great number of instrumental works, but a period in which music from experimental jazz and the avant-garde were commonly performed. Historical recognition of Denisov's synthesis of jazz and popular elements within a composition have been focused on his 1973 work, *La vie en rouge*. However, the *Sonata* predates *La vie en rouge* by three years and was, in fact, his first mature use of jazz synthesis in a solo instrumental work.

It is the intent of this treatise to provide saxophonists with an illumination of the importance of jazz elements in the *Sonata for Alto Saxophone and Piano*. Once this influence has been recognized, the saxophonist has a greater capability of creating an accurate and moving interpretation of this work, as well and other works that cross the boundaries of style and influence.

## Chapter 1

### **Influence of Jazz Upon Melody, Harmony and Rhythm**

Author M. Robert Rogers once observed, “America, during the exciting decade of the nineteen-twenties, became suddenly aware that in her popular music she had produced an idiom not only in keeping with the tempo of her life, but capable of being looked upon as an original artistic contribution from a country often regarded as excessively eclectic in cultural fields.”<sup>7</sup> The development of jazz music in the 20<sup>th</sup> century is characterized by the blending of many musical styles and practices. With its roots ranging from the aural and rhythmic traditions of Africa to the rich compositional output of Europe, jazz is now recognized as one of the strongest sources of influence upon modern music.

Although American classical composers were slow to avail themselves of the rich and diverse influences of jazz, the composers of Europe, most notably France, quickly digested them. It is through the pioneering works of Milhaud, Honneger, and Satie that the freshness and energy of jazz influence found acceptance in classical composition. This excitement and energy was recognized by Jean Cocteau when he described jazz as:

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<sup>7</sup> Robert M. Rogers. “Jazz Influence on French Music,” *Musical Quarterly* 21 (1935) : 53.

“It is life. It is the drunkenness of sounds and noises. It is the animal joy of supple movements. It is the melancholy of the passions. It is we of today.”<sup>8</sup>

A detailed and in-depth discussion of jazz and its performance practices would be too broad in scope for inclusion in this thesis. However, a general discussion of the interpretation and application of jazz to general areas of musical performance, such as melody, harmony and rhythm, will prove pertinent and useful in a discussion of jazz influence upon the *Sonata for Alto Saxophone and Piano* by Edison Denisov.

## **Melody**

Part of the excitement and mystique of jazz music is the element of the unexpected. For the listener, “the excitement is in knowing that no one, on stage or in the audience, knows exactly what melodies will be woven by the soloist.”<sup>9</sup> In the European classical tradition, melody exists as an element that can be created, observed or explained in relation to the use of harmony. In some instances the melody may be subservient to the harmonic structure of a work. Commonly, classical melodies use strong antecedent and consequent relationships, giving balance (or a lack thereof) and purpose of structure and form.

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 55.

<sup>9</sup> Jerry Coker. *Listening to Jazz*. (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1978), 44.

A flowing melodic character seems to be intrinsic to jazz melody. There is a greater freedom of creation, by the performer, and thus the potential for greater excitement generated in the listener. Beginning in the 1940's with the development of bebop, melodies started to break from their close relationship with harmony. Early on this was initiated through the use of phrases that began within an eight-bar section and continued into the next section without pause. Improvisers were able to propel their solos by beginning or ending their solos on different beats within a measure. The result was a greater rhythmic and melodic freedom, allowing the performer to blur harmonic forms by playing across the bar line, thus altering traditional antecedent and consequent relationships of melody.

French jazz critic and author, André Hodeir noted differences between classical and jazz performance, "Composers in the European tradition conceive a phrase by itself and then make it fit the requirements of a given instrument. The jazz improviser creates only in terms of the instrument he plays. In extreme instances of assimilation, the instrument becomes in some way a part of him."<sup>10</sup> It was this type of assimilation that gave identity to such great jazz artists as Miles Davis, Stan Getz and Bill Evans.

Greater melodic freedom was achieved through specific note selections. The judicious use of leading tones and non-harmonic tones by "[Charlie] Parker

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<sup>10</sup> Joachim E. Berendt. *The Jazz Book: From Ragtime to Fusion and Beyond*. (Brooklyn: Lawrence Hill Books, 1992), 182.



and his followers, was based on the practice of disguising essential chord tones in a melody by surrounding them with nonessential, non-chord tones.”<sup>11</sup> In combination with rhythm these melodies defied not only the bar line but created tension with harmonic function as well (see Example 1). Much like J.S. Bach had codified a melodic language centuries earlier, Charlie Parker, Dizzy Gillespie and Thelonious Monk would establish the melodic language of the modern jazz era.

Example 1: Bebop jazz line with nonessential chord tones

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Further explorations and developments such as modal jazz, with its static harmonies and free jazz, which often omitted harmonic structures, “significantly loosened the tendencies of jazz phrasing. Although phrases retained patterns

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<sup>11</sup> Richard L. Lawn and Jeffrey L. Hellmer. *Jazz: Theory and Practice*. (Van Nuys: Alfred Publishing Company, 1996), 73.

common to preceding jazz eras, they were free to phrase with greater variety due to the lack of underlying chord movements.”<sup>12</sup>

Jerry Coker observed: “Modal tunes (modality) also permit the improviser more time to use intensifying devices, such as a gradual increasing volume level, a slow rise in the range, a gradual thickening in terms of the number of notes used (rhythmic density) or an intensity rise effected by becoming more and more complex or dissonant, harmonically, throughout the length of the solo.”<sup>13</sup>

Therefore as jazz developed, melodic improvisations no longer depended upon a harmonic framework. Rather, a tension began to exist between the vertical sonority of the harmony and the horizontal presentation of the melody. Armed with the ability to create improvisations with greater freedom, the jazz artist was able to generate more excitement.

Unlike in classical music where the creation of the melodic line is the responsibility of the composer and the interpretation of that line is the responsibility of the performer, the jazz performer is entrusted to create, interpret and present the melody to the audience. Spontaneous improvisation, through the careful application of such elements as, “attack, vibrato, accentuation, blue notes,

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<sup>12</sup> Mark C. Gridley. *Jazz Styles: History and Analysis*, 8<sup>th</sup> ed. (Upper Saddle River: Prentice Hall, 2003), 386.

<sup>13</sup> Coker, 58.

rhythmic placement, etc, are so closely connected with a jazz melody that it may become meaningless without them.”<sup>14</sup>

German jazz critic and author Joquim-Ernst Berendt observed the subtlety of the jazz melody when he wrote, “The fine points of phrasing, attack, accentuation, expression and conception cannot be expressed in notation, and since everything depends on these subtleties, notation is largely unsatisfactory. When jazz melodies separated from these subtleties appear on note paper, they often seem primitive and banal.”<sup>15</sup>

Blues, with its, sliding effects and indeterminate tonalities through the use of “in between tones”, and has been employed with great frequency in jazz melodies. It is this melodic flexibility that captivated so many classical composers in the early decades of the twentieth century. The influence of blues elements can be found in works by such composers as Darius Milhaud’s *Creation du monde* and Maurice Ravel’s *Piano Concerto (1930)* and *L’Enfant et les sortil.*

<sup>16</sup> Conversely, use of blues in jazz music is so common that jazz educators identify the “blues scale” as a common teaching tool in modern jazz education (see Example 2, pg. 12)

Unlike the classical performer who is allowed little license to change elements of melody, the jazz performer is capable of extemporaneously adding

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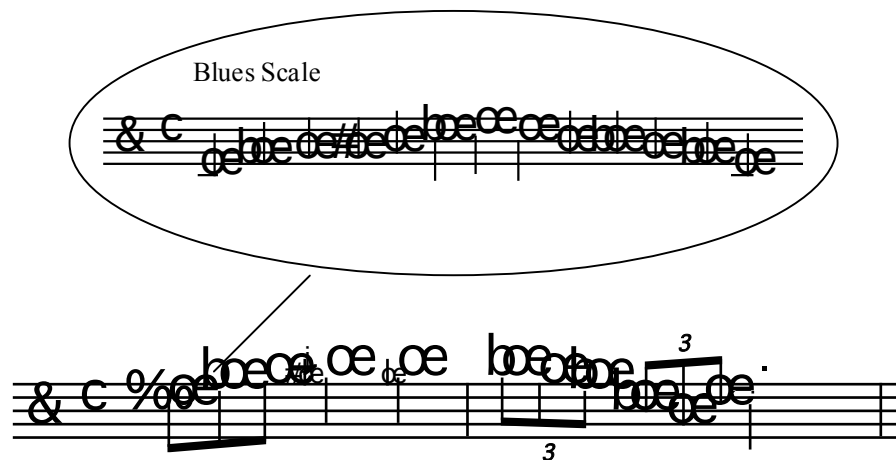
<sup>14</sup> Berendt, 182.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 183.

<sup>16</sup> Rogers, 64.

emotional music effects such as “blue” notes to his or her improvised melodies. Additionally, timbral manipulations such as growls, flutter tonguing, attack and altissimo add to the energy and drama of a jazz performance. Initially these timbral effects were

Example 2: The blues scale and its use.



created as a means for the instrumentalist to imitate the emotional effects of the human voice. With the dissolving of harmony as a primary force in jazz of the 1950's and 1960's, the artist began to utilize extra-musical effects as means for expression. “The bluesiest times of early jazz came back in the free period [1960's] although often in apparent random disarray.”<sup>17</sup>

## Harmony

<sup>17</sup> John Fordham. *Jazz*. (New York: Dorling Kindersley, 1993), 128.

Jazz, an amalgam of various elements from many diverse musical styles, draws its use of harmony from European practice and traditions. Harmony is the gravitational force of a composition and the earliest use of harmonies in jazz music was reserved for the most basic of structures. Centered on common-use chords, most notably the dominant chord, jazz harmony was primitive in comparison to classical music in Europe of the same time. Initially rooted in the blues tradition, with its retrogression of dominant chords, innovators such as Louis Armstrong, Sidney Bechet and Jelly Roll Morton began to explore and deepen the implication of harmony through their improvisations.

Later Duke Ellington would use colorful and complex harmonies to showcase his music and the members of his orchestra. “Bebop musicians began to stack 9ths, 11ths and 13ths, in alterations to create a new harmonic framework. Such combinations of notes were mostly common to European music.”<sup>18</sup> Charlie Parker, voracious in his pursuit and study of music, was often seen carrying the scores of Stravinsky, pointing out fascinating aspects of harmony to anyone who would listen. In the 1960’s progressive compositional advancements such as modality, exemplified by Miles Davis (beginning with his album *Kind of Blue*-1959), and poly-chordal explorations of Dave Brubeck (who had studied with

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 132.

Darius Milhaud) would introduce more open and colorful sonorities for the improviser.

Jazz musicians quickly recognized that extending chords, beyond their basic structure, could not only support the melodic ideas they created, those structures could create variety and thus new avenues for improvisation. However, it is the concept of tension and release in which harmony best serves the jazz musician. “In much jazz, they [harmonies] also underpin increasingly complex tensions and releases between an improviser’s impromptu melody line and the harmony it travels on.”<sup>19</sup>

Much as they create melody, jazz musicians spontaneously apply elements such as rhythm, attack and volume to harmony to create excitement in a performance. Often the execution of harmonic structures is left to the jazz pianist, who serves as a member of a rhythm section (with bass, drums and guitar).

The harmonic role of the pianist is often shared with the bassist who, through single-note base lines, outlines the harmonic framework of a piece. “Jazz pianists often arrange the tones in a chord in a particular way, called a chord voicing, to achieve a sound that is idiomatic to the jazz style.”<sup>20</sup> Since the bass outlines the basic harmonic form, the piano player is free to omit roots of chords creating “rootless” voicings. Additionally the pianist is able to alter common

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 132.

<sup>20</sup> Lawn, 133.

tones, such as the 5<sup>th</sup> or 9<sup>th</sup> to create colorful sonorities without disrupting the function of the harmony.

These harmonic structures are often presented as rhythmic punctuations known as “comping”. “Bebop players also inserted ‘passing chords’, linking one step of the original harmony to another with voicings related to both to create deeper levels of tension and resolution and further expand the palette of related scales for the improviser.”<sup>21</sup> With the advent of modality and freer, more avant-garde styles of jazz, the purpose of harmony became more atmospheric in the creation of tonal colors rather than the gravitational force of the harmonic structure.

## **Rhythm**

If melody and harmony are the nexus where western classical music and jazz find common ground then rhythm is where they diverge. “Because its early history was intimately connected with dance, and because of earlier antecedents in African music, rhythm has assumed a significance higher than that of melody in the development of jazz.”<sup>22</sup>

One can underscore the importance of rhythm to jazz in the designation of a specific group of players, in a jazz ensemble, referred to as the “rhythm

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<sup>21</sup> Fordham, 132.

section”. This section, made up of piano (and/or guitar), bass, and drums, is charged with many responsibilities, but a primary one is the maintenance of a rhythmic pulse. Additionally, “players in the rhythm section delineate the piece’s harmonic-rhythmic form, support one another’s evolving lines of thought, and fashion individual parts with inherent interest and change.”<sup>22</sup>

One of the identifiable elements of jazz is its forward, driving pulse and rhythm. Commonly referred to as “motor rhythm”, the rhythm section shares in the creation and maintenance of this pulse. Typically, the bass, through the use of a walking bass line or bass ostinato, and the drums, through the establishment of a rhythmic and stylistic pattern, anchor the ensemble giving rise to more adventurous performances by the soloist.

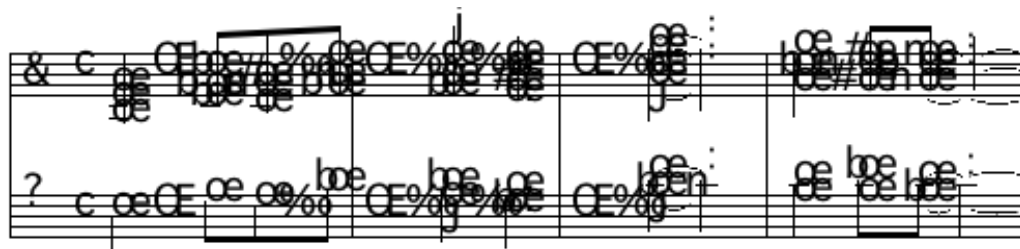
Once this rhythmic foundation has been established, the pianist is free to present harmonic forms through highly syncopated and punctuated interjections to the rhythmic pulse. This “comping” style allows the pianist the ability to play against the rhythmic pulse as well as present harmony and alter the harmonic functions through chromatic and diatonic planing (see Example 3). Often the responsibility of time keeping rotates between the various members of the rhythm section, and the presentation of this pulse may be clearly stated or implied.

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<sup>22</sup> Paul F. Berliner, *Thinking In Jazz: The Infinite Art of Improvisation*. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1994), 353.



Example 3: Jazz piano “comping”



“‘Swing,’ the elusive and unique rhythmic quality of jazz, existed neither in traditional African music nor in Europe but grew in the New World.”<sup>23</sup> Where today the excitement of jazz music can be attributed to the melodic and harmonic advancements of its artists, it was rhythm, importantly the concept of swing, which captivated the world’s audiences. Over the years many have had a difficult time trying to codify what constitutes swing. Composer Aaron Copland recognized the rhythmic importance of swing but felt jazz music’s identity was centered around one particular element of swing, the polyrhythm. He offered this definition, “The peculiar excitement [jazz] produces by clashing two definitely and regularly marked rhythms is unprecedented in the occidental music. Its polyrhythm is the real contribution of jazz.”<sup>24</sup>

Although a universal definition of swing has not been created, one may interpret it as the conflict of displaced rhythms with a consistent pulse, that

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<sup>23</sup> Fordham, 130.

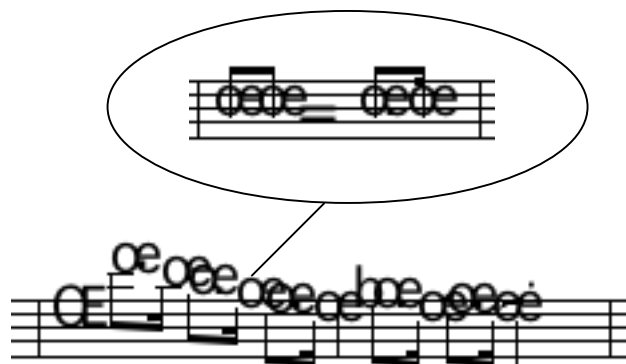
<sup>24</sup> Rogers, 54.

produces a relaxed time feel, yet sustains a forward momentum. The notation of swing has been equally difficult to standardize. Prior to the bebop revolution of the 1940's swing lines were commonly notated using either a dotted eighth note-sixteenth note pattern or implied time feel. As bebop players began to use increasingly complex tempos and rhythms, notation moved to that of eighth notes with an implied triplet feel (see Example 4, pg. 19). Composer Leonard Bernstein attempted to capture the lilting, swing feel of jazz in the notation of his *Overture to West Side Story*. By notating the score in 12/8 time and utilizing accented triplets, rather than eighth notes, Bernstein was able to approximate the swing feel found in jazz.

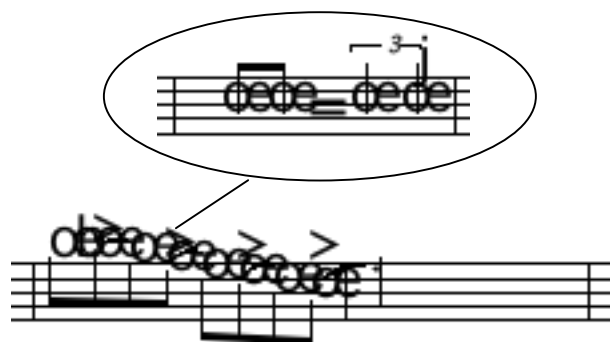
The element of conflict or confrontation, as it pertains to rhythm, is a very compelling and useful technique commonly used in jazz. Just as swing creates energy through the confrontation of an accent pulse with a ground pulse; the concept of call and response creates a similar energy in jazz. As much a melodic element as a rhythmic one, call and response creates a musical conversation between individuals or sections of an ensemble. Traceable to the rhythmic practice of Africa, this technique was masterfully used by such bandleaders as Fletcher Henderson and William "Count" Basie.

Example 4: Implied rhythmic feel-Swing vs. Bebop

Swing Notation/Implication, pre bebop:



Swing Notation/Implication, post bebop:



Accentuation plays a very strong role in the creation of jazz. Author Paul Berliner, in his book *Thinking in Jazz* discussed how accentuation plays a role in the presentation of jazz:

Over the span of a phrase, they [jazz musicians] produce subtle shifts of accentuation between backbeats two and four - temporarily challenging the metric structure and generating rhythmic tension - on beats one and three, reinforcing the metric structure and resolving rhythmic tension. The alternation between offbeat and on-beat emphasis creates similar schemes of tension and release. Various techniques accomplish the same goals,

each with distinctive qualities of expression. Artists may produce diverse accentuation schemes simply by varying the selection of beats or parts of the beat on which they change dynamic levels or melodic direction. They may throw different accents on the contour of a recurring gesture through rhythmic displacement, that is by performing the gesture at different metric positions.<sup>25</sup>

Through the careful placement of accents, the jazz musician is able to create a number of effective and captivating rhythmic effects. Syncopation, originally referred to as “ragged rhythms”, was one of the first elements from jazz to be identified and incorporated into classical compositions by such composers as Milhaud, Stravinsky and Debussy. Created through the manipulations of dotted rhythms used in jazz, the stressing of weaker melody note or off beats created an unexpected accent within a regular pulse stream. Likewise the use of rhythmic anticipation when applied to harmony presents the listener with greater rhythmic excitement and a sense of unpredictability.

However, the application of syncopated rhythms to melodies is not the only means for creating rhythmic excitement. Through the judicious placement of rests, the jazz musician is able to create a subtle, yet effective form of accentuation. It was this concept of the use of space that was so closely identified with trumpeter Miles Davis. In contrast, a player such as Lester Young could create rhythmic excitement through the repetition of isolated note combinations. These iso-rhythms create rhythmic tension, energy and drive (see Example 5).

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<sup>25</sup> Berliner, 156.

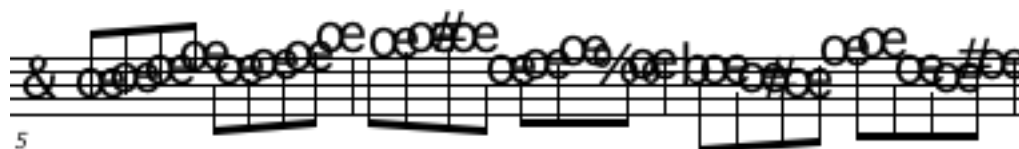
Example 5: Iso-rhythmic use in jazz



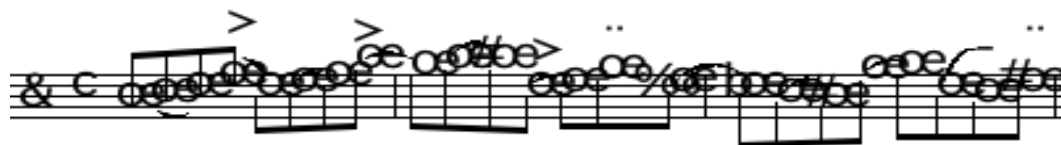
Through the use of varied articulations and note groupings, jazz musicians could segment a melodic line into different rhythmic groups giving weight to specific pitches and tonalities, thus giving a greater sense of unpredictability. Often the simple application of accents and articulations would give rise to greater rhythmic structures such as cross rhythms (see Example 6).

Example 6: Jazz Interpretation

Original line:



Jazz interpretation of original line:



Famed bandleader Glen Miller achieved tremendous commercial success with the Joe Garland composition , *In the Mood*, which placed accents to an otherwise simple eighth-note line, creating a three-against-four cross rhythm. The syncopated feel that resulted served the swing-based ensemble quite well in creating a highly danceable composition (see Example 7).

Example 7: Cross rhythm found in *In the Mood* (mm. 9-12)



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Today, the techniques of accent and articulation are so commonly employed that the International Association for Jazz Education (formerly the National Association of Jazz Educators) codified and published a supplement titled *The Standardization of Stage Band Articulations*. (see Diagram A, pg. 25)

Commonly, the use of free interpretation of phrase could create polyrhythmic patterns and melodies that do not rhythmically adhere to a rational sphere of proportion. This manipulation of tempo is done to create tension within the time feel and is seldom executed with a formula or ratio in mind and is as much device of melodic construction as a rhythmic one. Additionally, the

notation of such an effect, in jazz music, is given the most general of notation, usually a phrase such as “drag”, “play back”, etc. In very few situations will the composer note a mathematical ratio or proportion to achieve a general effect.






















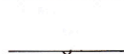
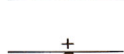
Such rhythmic practices are at the heart and foundation of jazz music. From Louis Armstrong’s rhythmic inventions on his *Hot Fives and Hot Sevens* recordings to the dissolution and resolution of rhythm in the ensembles of Ornette Coleman, jazz thrives on the interplay, confrontation and resolution of rhythm and time.

Furthermore the allure and influence of jazz music can be found not only in the direct quotation of jazz but also in the interpretation of various elements from jazz music. The careful integration of melody, harmony and rhythm is what feeds and sustains the jazz musician and gives rise to the excitement of his or her creations.

Diagram A: The Standardization of Stage Band Articulations

### The Standardization of Stage Band Articulations

*National Association of Jazz Educators*

 <p><b>HEAVY ACCENT</b> Hold full value.</p>	 <p><b>WAH</b> Full tone—not muffled (Plunger open).</p>
 <p><b>HEAVY ACCENT</b> Hold less than full value.</p>	 <p><b>SHORT GLISS UP</b> Slide into note from below (usually one to three steps). No individual notes are heard in a gliss.</p>
 <p><b>HEAVY ACCENT</b> Short as possible.</p>	 <p><b>LONG GLISS UP</b> Same as above except longer entrance.</p>
 <p><b>STACCATO</b> Short—not heavy.</p>	 <p><b>SHORT GLISS DOWN</b> The reverse of the short gliss up.</p>
 <p><b>LEGATO TONGUE</b> Hold full value.</p>	 <p><b>LONG GLISS DOWN</b> The reverse of the long gliss up.</p>
 <p><b>THE SHAKE</b> A variation of the tone upwards—much like a trill.</p>	 <p><b>SHORT LIFT</b> Enter note via chromatic or diatonic scale beginning about a third below.</p>
 <p><b>LIP TRILL</b> Similar to shake but slower and with more lip control.</p>	 <p><b>LONG LIFT</b> Same as above except longer entrance.</p>
 <p><b>WIDE LIP TRILL</b> Same as above except slower with wider interval.</p>	 <p><b>SHORT SPILL</b> Rapid diatonic or chromatic drop. The reverse of the short lift.</p>
 <p><b>THE FLIP</b> Sound note, raise pitch, drop into following note (done with lip on brass).</p>	 <p><b>LONG SPILL</b> Same as above except longer exit.</p>
 <p><b>THE SMEAR</b> Slide into note from below and reach correct pitch just before next note. Do not rob preceding note.</p>	 <p><b>THE PLOP</b> A rapid slide down harmonic or diatonic scale before sounding note.</p>
 <p><b>THE DOIT</b> Sound note then gliss upwards from one to five steps.</p>	 <p><b>INDEFINITE SOUND</b> (Ghost or Swallowed notes) Deadened tone—indefinite pitch.</p>
 <p><b>DU</b> False or muffled tone (Plunger closed).</p>	

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## Chapter 2

### Edison Denisov (1929-1996)

Born on April 6, 1929, in the Asiatic city of Tomsk, Edison Vasilyevich Denisov seemed destined for a life of self-discovery, inspiration and exploration. His father, Vasily Grigoryevich (1906-41), a radio physicist who was an early pioneer in the large-scale movement of wireless communication, brought to the Denisov household a love of science, mathematics, and electronics. His mother, Antonia Ivanovna Titova (b. 1905) was, by profession, a doctor who had an amateur interest in singing and music making.<sup>26</sup>

From an early age Edison showed a remarkable mind for detailed learning. Edik (as he was often known) was fascinated with numbers, showing a keen interest in mathematics by age two, chemistry by age five, and by his thirtieth birthday the “young Denisov [had] studied French and in due time became a great connoisseur of modern French literature and culture.”<sup>27</sup>

While living at a hostel for postgraduates of Physics and Mathematics at Tomsk University, where his father was completing his residence, a sixteen-year-old Denisov encountered a neighbor, a chemist by the name of Petrov who played the mandolin in a folk style. Denisov became captivated by the music he heard

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<sup>26</sup> Yuri Kholopov and Valeria Tsenova. *Edison Denisov*. (Chur: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1995), 1.

<sup>27</sup> Levon Hakobian and H.B. Kantat. *Music of the Soviet Age 1917-1987*. (Stockholm: Melos Music Literature, 1998), 262.

and Petrov became Denisov's first music teacher, helping to cultivate the boy's interest in folk music. Denisov continued his musical study and by age sixteen had taught himself clarinet, seven-string guitar and had created a small ensemble that would present informal concerts at local hospitals.<sup>28</sup>

### **Serving Two Masters**

Music continued to occupy an important part in his life, however he bowed to his family's pressure to find a "legitimate" career and enrolled in the Physics and Mathematics Department of Tomsk University. Yet his mathematical pursuits were not without conflict. Denisov once commented, "I felt no particular attraction to either physics or mathematics. But since my father had a big library and I always liked his occupation, I decided that I should follow suit. I felt increasingly drawn to the most abstract domains of mathematics such as mathematical logic and topology."<sup>29</sup>

While enrolled in a course of lectures by Zakhar Ivanovich Klementyev, a charismatic teacher known for drawing relationships between mathematical principals and literature, art and music, he found that the study of music could still occupy a portion of his time. This influential environment would prove to be fertile ground for Edison giving him the impetus to compose and pursue the more

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<sup>28</sup> Kholopov, 2.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 4.

scientific aspects of music. Throughout his life, he sought to develop the ability to clearly explain all musical functions.

In 1950, nearing the completion of degrees in both mathematics and music from Tomsk University Denisov realized he could not effectively serve the two masters of mathematics and music, and in a bold step wrote the composer Dmitry Shostakovich for guidance. Shostakovich found time to respond to the young Denisov and asked him to send scores. After receiving Denisov's compositions Shostakovich wrote, "*Dear Edik, your compositions have astonished me. I believe that you are endowed with a great gift for composition, and it would be a great sin to bury your talent.*"<sup>30</sup>

With the encouragement of the elder composer, Denisov moved to Moscow in 1950 to gain entrance to the Conservatoire. Although two members of the admissions committee, Bogatyrev and Shebalin, recognized his love of composition, they did not agree with the elder composer and denied him entrance to the conservatory on the basis that he had a poor grasp of music theory.

Undeterred, Denisov returned to Tomsk University where he graduated with honors as a specialist in functional analysis. In 1951, a thoroughly prepared Denisov returned to Moscow to retake the conservatory exams. This trip proved successful and he was admitted as a student of the composition department. For

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 4.

the next eight years, Denisov would be a student at the Conservatory of Music, first as an undergraduate (1951-1956) and later as a postgraduate student (1956-1959).

His time at the conservatory was filled with the influence of many teachers including Vissarion Shebalin, Valadimir Belov, Victor Zuckerman and Semyon Bogatyryev. Throughout this time, however, Denisov remained close to Shostakovich both as a mentor and as a compositional model. Many of Denisov's early compositions pay homage to Shostakovich and demonstrate Edison's ability to synthesize an influence into his own unique compositional style. At Shostakovich's insistence, Denisov began a five-year study with Vissarion Shebalin.

The Soviet leadership, particularly under Stalin and Khrushchev, was quite strict about the study and performance of works by western "bourgeois" composers, banning their open study at the conservatory. Despite this setback, he and his fellow students were able to acquaint themselves with a variety of music and composers.

Although forbidden by the Central Committee of the Communist Party, Shebalin pressed on "[striving] to familiarize his students with a wide range of music, modern compositions included. He was intent to make out of them versatile musicians with a broad scope and true knowledge of musical literature

the conservatoire course of which could not meet their quests.”<sup>31</sup> It was Shebalin who encouraged Denisov to explore the music of Claude Debussy, feeling the young Denisov shared similar compositional traits with the grand master.

Denisov was dedicated to the study of different, often eclectic styles of music. Since the study of highly experimental music and popular styles was forbidden in the conservatory, intimate gatherings known as “creative evenings” began appearing in the homes of composers on Gorky Street. Edison became quite active in moderating and hosting many of these events in the homes of “composers and patrons who were not closely aligned with the Central Committee of the Communist Party.”<sup>32</sup>

As he reached the end of his postgraduate studies Denisov began to feel that his years spent at the conservatory had not fully acquainted him with all the possibilities music had to offer. Therefore, he began an intense period of self-study including a variety of musical styles and composers. Denisov had already demonstrated an aptitude for exploration while at the conservatory. On three separate occasions, from 1954-1956, he embarked on studies into the regional folk music and practices of the Kursk, Altay and Siberian regions.<sup>33</sup> During these trips he would document folk styles and performance practices.

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>32</sup> Schwartz, “*Music and Musical Life in Soviet Russia*”, 628

<sup>33</sup> V. Kholopova, “Edison Denisov,” in *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 2001 ed.

Even though the exploration of the collective works of Stravinsky, Bartok, Debussy and Hindemith was more than a necessary step in his musical development, it was the only logical step in his never-tiring thirst for information. From 1959-1964 Denisov limited his compositional output to study the collective works of the masters. In an ironic twist of fate it was during this time in 1960 that he accepted a position on the faculty of the Moscow Conservatory as a professor of analysis.

Yet, this time of self-exploration proved to be a very important time in his development as a composer, for he was exploring and assimilating musical styles and procedures that would become the foundation for a highly personal style of composition.

It is no surprise that Denisov began to relate to Bartok and his explorations into folk practices. He also embraced Stravinsky and Debussy, two composers who met with strong disfavor among the Composers Union and Soviet Central Committee. However, he rejected Hindemith's works, feeling they lacked emotion and energy.

#### **1964: The Birth of His "Individual Style"**

One might assume that an in-depth exploration into so many works by such diverse composers would result in an overtly borrowed style. Instead,

Denisov shocked critics and brought world attention to his music with his cantata *The Sun of the Incas*. A mature work in a twelve-tone style presents what many have labeled his “Individual Style”, which Khopolov defines as:

“Highly emotional writing with extreme states of expressiveness, in which the melodic line in most cases is a fine iridescent thread, and the entity is made up of weaving such threads together. Where Denisov is not keen on experimentation in other arts, [he does] introduce some influences from them into his music. Moreover, the factors are inherent in the artistic structure of his music—a tendency for free structure.”<sup>34</sup>

With *The Sun of the Incas* one can see Denisov’s talent for keeping abreast of current trends in music, and stripping representative compositions down to their essence. Once the compositional force has been identified, Denisov finely weaves this or that element into his greater compositional vision. The result is a highly personal style that appears to be devoid of any overt compositional influence. Author Yuri Kholopov writes:

“The revelation of Denisov’s individual style is a fact as much curious as it is spontaneous in its naturalness, which makes us consider modern music as a theme or discourse. What drives an artist to run against the stream, against the traditions and conventions of his environment? Today, we realize that he had been right from the start; keeping abreast of the times [as well as traditions] and finding his own place and style. But in those times he looked like a madman plunging into unexplored waters.”<sup>35</sup>

With this work and subsequent works such as: *Peinture* (1970), *Piano Trio* (1971), and *La vie en rouge* (1973) he would solidify himself along with

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<sup>34</sup> Kholopov, 45.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 47.

Andrey Volkonsky as “one of the most important leaders of the post-Shostakovich generation in Russia.”<sup>36</sup> In the years following *The Sun of the Incas* Denisov would enjoy world favor of his work and would compose feature works for such luminary figures as flautist Aurel Nicolet, oboist Heinz Holliger, saxophonist Jean-Marie Londeix and singers Dorothy Dorow, Basia Retchitska and Roswitha Trexler.<sup>37</sup>

However, his international attention did not sit favorably with the high powers of the Soviet government or the Composers Union. Much like his mentor Dmitry Shostakovich, Denisov was severely criticized by the Union of Composers and, because of the highly emotional and individual style of *The Sun of the Incas*, performances of the piece were banned in 1967.

Unlike Shostakovich who had bowed to pressure from the government, Denisov did not stray from his idealistic stance of music with no boundaries. This point of view was presented in numerous articles, written by Denisov (in non-Soviet publications), including: *The New Technique Is Not A Fashion* and *New Music and Jazz*.<sup>38</sup>

Despite resistance by the Soviet government and threat of sanction and censure, Denisov, the educator, came to represent the highest standard of musical

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<sup>36</sup>V. Kholopova. “Edison Denisov,” in *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 2001 ed.

<sup>37</sup> Hakobian, 265.

<sup>38</sup> Both articles appeared in *Tempo*, A Quarterly Review of Modern Music.



equality to his students by presenting diverse musical styles to his students.

Composer and former student Sergei Pavlenko said of Denisov:

“Edison Denisov proved very important to me. In his class I could get the musical information previously unavailable to me, learn about the latest events in the world of modern music, and familiarize myself with the new scores and recordings, Denisov’s own compositions included. Naturally enough, for several years I remained under his influence, though always striving for my own inimitable ‘voice’. I recall how once, already after my graduation from the conservatoire, Denisov during one of our talks expressed a curious thought: ‘*you must come to hate my style to become a good composer*’.”<sup>39</sup>

The 1980’s brought Denisov continued acceptance throughout the world, including such accolades as Officier de l’Ordre des Arts et des Lettres (France 1986) and the Mitglieder der Bayerischen Akademie der Schönen Künste (Germany 1989).<sup>40</sup> In 1990 much to the surprise of his colleagues and students he accepted a high office in the Union of Composers, “perhaps thinking that this position would enable him to change those aspects of Russian Musical life that he had previously found so distasteful.”<sup>41</sup>

The 1990’s brought misfortune to Denisov. Early in the decade he was involved in a serious auto accident that left his body in a weakened condition. After a move to Paris, a city he loved dearly, he was diagnosed with cancer in 1995. He died on November 24, 1996, at age sixty-seven in his Paris home.

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<sup>39</sup> Valeria Tsenova, *Underground Music from the Former USSR* (The Netherlands: Harwood Academic, 1997), 244.

<sup>40</sup> S. Bradshaw, “Edison Denisov,” *Contemporary Composers*, rev. ed, pg. 218

<sup>41</sup> Kholopov, 49.

## Chapter 3

### Jazz In Soviet Culture and its Influence Upon Edison Denisov

In the opening decades of the twentieth century the world would bear witness to great change, both politically and technologically. In 1917, two events exemplified opposing ideologies that would shape the life of Edison Denisov. In Eastern Europe, the Bolshevik revolution served as the impetus for the rise of the Communist Party and ultimately the United Soviet Socialist Republic (U.S.S.R). A continent away, the first jazz recordings by the Original Dixieland Jazz Band (O.D.J.B) served as the first tangible documentation of the “Jazz Age”<sup>42</sup>, and with it the music that would become “The Great American Theme Song.”<sup>43</sup>

#### Jazz in Soviet Culture

In the aftermath of the First World War, American jazz swept throughout Europe, weaving its way into the fabric of café society. Its influence can be seen in the creative efforts of the visual artists Rousseau, Jarry, Apollinaire, Picasso, and composers Erik Satie, Claude Debussy and the members of Les Six. Despite the aims of the communist party to rid their people of the “bourgeois decadence”

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<sup>42</sup> The term “Jazz Age” was coined by author F. Scott Fitzgerald in his work *The Great Gatsby*.

<sup>43</sup> The term “The Great American Theme Song” was coined by author James Lincoln Collier in his work *Jazz: The Great American Theme Song*.

of the west, Russia was not immune to the influence of jazz nor could it prevent its diffusion into Russian culture.

In 1925 the jazz saxophonist and clarinetist Sidney Bechet began an extended tour of Europe, spending six months in the Soviet Union, touring various regions, and creating a sensation among the soviet musicians. Such soviet musicians as Leonid Utesov and Isaak Dunayevsky quickly absorbed the new music. This prompted the Russian Association of Proletarian Musicians (RAPM) to ban jazz in 1929.<sup>44</sup>

This would not be the last time jazz music would meet with harsh criticism from the Soviet government. The brutality of the Stalinist regime was no deterrent for the spread of jazz music. The 1932 Russian film *Vesyolye rebyata* (Gay Youngsters) featured the jazz music of Soviet pianist/bandleader Alexander Tsfasman. In 1938 an official State Jazz Band was created featuring the best and brightest musicians from throughout Russia under Tsfasman's direction.<sup>45</sup>

However, any ensemble that openly copied music from the West, let alone a music so closely tied to popular American culture, was strictly prohibited. In an attempt to divert attention from the Central Committee the ensemble tried to lighten the jazz content of their music. However, Stalin felt any influence, even if

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<sup>44</sup> Schwartz, 360.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 361.

it was the mere knowledge of jazz by the musicians, was too much. Thus, the ensemble was terminated under a directive from the Central Committee.

Although the United States and Russia were at opposite ends of the political spectrum, both countries recognized the need for civilized relations. This invariably came in the form of cultural exchanges. In a constant show of cultural “one-upmanship” the Soviet government sent to the United States such groups as the famed Bolshoi Ballet, the Moscow Chamber Orchestra and the Moscow Symphony Orchestra. In return the State Department sponsored tours by American composer Aaron Copland and bandleader Benny Goodman just to name a few.

Copland and his assistant Lukas Foss toured the Soviet Union in 1960 and were “quite surprised by the existence of ‘jazz clubs’, though their repertoire and playing style were imitative of American–type jazz.”<sup>46</sup> Usually in big band format, these groups could best be described as “Kentonesque” [in the style of Stan Kenton’s orchestra], using large instrumentation in a highly orchestrated style.

A few years later the bandleader Benny Goodman, who had long removed himself from the American jazz scene, assembled a group of all-star jazz players for a State Department sponsored tour of Russia. The band was met with

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 332.

overwhelming support from the Russian people, playing to capacity audiences. Although the tour was a musical and financial disappointment for Goodman, it did strike a blow at the Khrushchev led Soviet Party, showing that the interest in “western” ideals was strong.

The success of the Goodman tour came at the end of a tumultuous two-year sparring session between the Soviet government and the Kennedy administration over nuclear missiles in Cuba. This, along with Goodman’s successful tour, caused chairman Nikita Khrushchev, in 1963, to denounce the playing of jazz stating, “I don’t like jazz. When I hear jazz, it’s as if I had gas on the stomach!”<sup>47</sup> Although the U.S. State Department offered other jazz related groups to Russia for exchanges, they were politely declined.

Despite strong party resistance to jazz, the music was studied in Russia in a variety of inventive ways. In many instances musicians were forced to transcribe solos from smuggled phonograph recordings from the West. After the division of Berlin, shortly after the end of the Second World War, Willis Conover’s *Jazz USA* broadcasts on the *Voice of America* radio network provided a plethora of jazz music for any resourceful Soviet musician who was capable of receiving the program. Author Boris Schwarz commented on the success of these programs:

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 361.

“Jazz has had a checkered history in Soviet Russia. Popular in the 1920’s, suppressed by Stalin, disliked by Khrushchev, belittled by Khrennikov, jazz has managed to survive and grow in popularity. Western jazz became known mainly through radio broadcasts from the West. Willis Conover’s ‘Jazz USA’ programs on the Voice of America, now in their third decade, have made jazz tunes so popular to millions of Soviet listeners that they applaud in recognition when they hear the first bars.”<sup>48</sup>

Although the Soviet government banned jazz music, this did not prevent its study and performance. “To play it, jazz musicians gathered together behind the closed doors in some flat in the suburbs, which was jokingly called a ‘Jazz Shelter.’”<sup>49</sup> Lukas Foss commented on these types of “creative evenings” in which a variety of music, including jazz, were programmed:

Casual visitors to Moscow are not likely to hear [western] avant-garde music in the usual concert halls: the musically initiated can find it in gatherings often disguised as “Creative Evenings”. Such concerts are held in the tiny auditorium of the House of Composers off Gorky Street. Admission is by invitation only, and the fifty to one hundred people who attend are usually musical specialists.<sup>50</sup>

Musicians and composers were often able to present music of a jazz nature by omitting any reference to the terms *jazz* or *improvisation*. A prime example of this was Russian composer Dimitry Shostakovich who wrote several pieces for jazz band in the 1930’s. It was these pieces that not only helped fuel the popularity of jazz music in Russia, but also formed the foundation of Alexander Tsfasman’s popular jazz band in the 1930’s. However, intense pressure from

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 629.

<sup>49</sup> Kholopov, *Edison Denisov*, 6.

<sup>50</sup> Schwarz, 628.

party officials forced Schostakovich to re-title the pieces *Suites for Variety Orchestra*.<sup>51</sup> This Russian term *estradnaya muzyka* or variety-stage music was given to identify any music that was of a popular nature, including popular songs, movie music and jazz.<sup>52</sup>

Russian nationalism was not the creation of the Soviet government. The strong national pride for “all things Russian” was forged by the strong hand of the Eastern Orthodox Church centuries earlier and was carried on, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century writings of Alexander Griboyedov, Alexander Pushkin and the music of “The Russian Five”.<sup>53</sup>

While under the watchful eye of the Soviet government, musicians continued to openly pursue the study of jazz music. Using nationalism as a theme, they camouflaged their study as an attempt to discover a “Russian style” of jazz. Whether this was their true goal or simply an inventive way to navigate the political landscape is not clear. Nevertheless, in-depth discussions and performances of jazz music did take place.

The well known author and Russian jazz specialist Medvedev wrote a very important essay “Jazz at a Turning Point” in *Izvestia* (22 May 1965) in which he presented a history of jazz in Russia as well as a declaration for musicians to

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 361.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 361.

<sup>53</sup> Russian Five: Alexeyevich Balakirev, César Cui, Alexander Borodin, Modest Musorgsky and Nikolay Rimsky-Korsakov

discover a Soviet style of jazz. This essay prompted a three-day jazz festival in which fourteen jazz ensembles participated. Of the event Medvedev commented, “A new Soviet jazz style is being created slowly but surely. We understand that we must create our own, homegrown idiom. Let us search!”<sup>54</sup>

Following the Goodman visit the composer Khrennikov stated:

We are not opposed to jazz; we are only opposed to “Americanized jazz.” In time we shall develop a Soviet-style of jazz. Take, for example, the waltz: it was born in Vienna, to be sure, but look how *our* composers have transformed the waltz, given it a Russian flavor. The same will happen to jazz!<sup>55</sup>

Despite the aim of the ruling Communist party, composers such as Alfred Schnittke and Edison Denisov quickly became identified as a breed of modernist composer who had clearly synthesized the “fashionable” trends of the 1950’s and 1960’s, including jazz. In response to this labeling, both men claimed, “Now we do our own things.”<sup>56</sup>

### **Edison Denisov and His Exposure to Jazz**

Author and historian Susan Bradshaw, writing about the life and music of Edison Denisov wrote:

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<sup>54</sup> Schwarz, 445.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 361.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 635.



“Denisov, like other now distinguished Soviet composers of the same generation, had been totally cut off from the literature of non-Russian 20<sup>th</sup>-century music in its entirety until the late 1950’s: not a hint of any of the historic musical events of our time had been allowed to reach them, not even the developments in pre-1914 Vienna.”<sup>57</sup>

Where it is true that the official position of the Soviet government was to ban the study of progressive and experimental music, particularly advancements in twelve-tone music and jazz, this political directive could not stop private study of such music. This point was illuminated by composer Lukas Foss, who stated, “And yet, there was a cautious groundswell of interest in Western modernist techniques. Soviet composers are paralleling technical experiment in the West, and although serial music, electronic music and similar avant-garde movements are not current in Russia, they are known and studied privately.”<sup>58</sup>

It is highly improbable, considering the meticulous and inquisitive nature of Edison Denisov, that he was unaware of “any” musical advancements from the West. One can follow Denisov’s life, through his self-study, environment and contact with influential teachers and find that his exposure to western influence, including jazz, was frequent.

It has been documented that by age thirteen Denisov had become a “connoisseur of modern French literature and culture.”<sup>59</sup> By 1943 (Denisov’s

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<sup>57</sup> Susan Bradshaw. “The Music of Edison Denisov,” *Tempo*, n.s. 151 (1984) : 2.

<sup>58</sup> Schwarz, 332.

<sup>59</sup> Hakobian, *Music of the Soviet Age 1917-1987*, 262.

thirteenth year) the “New Spirit” first set into motion by Henri Rousseau, Erik Satie and Guillaume Apollinaire had become the basis for the creative amalgam of Les Six, Igor Stravinsky, Jean Cocteau and Pablo Picasso. If Denisov’s literary study had managed to allude any mention of music in modern French culture, the jazz-influenced, café society ideals of Jean Cocteau and his manifesto “Le Coq et l’Arlequin” where Cocteau wrote of jazz music:

It is life. It is art. It is the drunkenness of sounds and noises. It is the animal joy of supple movements. It is the melancholy of the passions. It is we of today.<sup>60</sup>

Similarly, one cannot downplay the early compositional influences upon Denisov and his music. Always influenced by personal exploration rather than Soviet political doctrine, concepts he encountered through direct contact with teachers Shostakovich and Shebalin or through his private study of composers, such as Debussy and Stravinsky, were strong.

Once again Bradshaw stated:

Denisov’s relatively late entry into the world of music led him as a young man to become passionately involved with the work of Russian composers first and foremost: particularly, as a youth in Tomsk, with that of Glinka, of Shostakovich as a student in Moscow, and later of Stravinsky. Of other 20<sup>th</sup> century composers he knew little or nothing. During his student years at the Conservatoire even the music of Debussy was forbidden, no one there dared speak of the Viennese, and he has never so much as heard of Bartok until he made the discovery for himself in 1950 or so.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Rogers, *Jazz Influence on French Music*, 55.

<sup>61</sup> Bradshaw, 3.

Again these statements are not entirely accurate. It is difficult to say to what extent Denisov became aware of Claude Debussy, at least peripherally, through his study of French modern culture, but it is clear that Vissarion Shebalin was instrumental in presenting the music of Debussy to his student Denisov. It was Shebalin who recognized that Denisov's compositional style favored that of the French master and directed him to Debussy's music, going as far as supplying scores. Furthermore it is clear that Shebalin created a learning environment that was devoid of the taboo doctrine from the party.

Shebalin's classes were permeated with an atmosphere of common sense, devoid of terror of a 'forbidden fruit' and blind worshipping of any innovation. A detailed analysis was made of some operas by Mozart, Glinka, Tchaikovsky, Rimsky-Korsakov, Mussorgsky and Debussy's *Pelleas et Melisande*. [Shebalin] also played in the class the musical compositions banned for performance, such as *The Buffoon* and *Esquisse autumnal* by Prokofiev and works of another 'formalist' Shostakovich. Shebalin introduced his students to the recorded music, which he, as a conservatoire professor had a chance to order abroad, among them the compositions of Stravinsky, Hindemith Schoenberg, Berg, Honegger, Dallapiccola and Petrassi.<sup>62</sup>

It is also clear that Debussy was thoroughly studied by Denisov during the period of self-study after his conservatory years. "The years 1959 to 1964 were an intensive period of self study for Denisov. He was determined to go through all

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<sup>62</sup> Kholopov, 7.

the composers discarded from the conservatoire curriculum, forbidden to study and whose names were not even mentioned within the conservatoire walls.”<sup>63</sup>

Hard-line political views taken toward Russian composers such as Shostakovich, Prokofiev and Stravinsky, who were labeled “formalists” by the Soviet Central Committee, did more to feed Denisov’s pursuit of their music than detour it.

“Igor Stravinsky became one of the most dangerous persons [to study], since he was an ‘émigré’ which meant a ‘betrayeur’ and ‘traitor to the Motherland’ who used to be executed by shooting some years earlier.”<sup>64</sup> Through his intensive study of Stravinsky’s music, Denisov was quick to recognize and identify with the complex rhythmic elements in Stravinsky’s works. With works such as *Petroushka* and *Le sacre du printemps*, Stravinsky was quickly recognized as one of the great modern composers capable of mastering the influential elements of jazz into a highly individual style. Critic, author and historian Issac Goldberg noted the importance of jazz in Stravinsky’s music when he stated, “Stravinsky, with his epochal ballet ‘Petroushka’ had made himself in 1911 the European pioneer of jazz.”<sup>65</sup>

In addition to Stravinsky, Denisov would pay homage to the influence of his mentor Shostakovich, in his compositions. Either through direct

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>65</sup> Rogers, 59.

compositional parallelism or through embedded melodic fragments Shostakovich's influence and importance is clear. In fact, numerous Denisov pieces, including the *Sonata for Alto Saxophone and Piano*, contain note-groups that represent the letters of Shostakovich's name.

Denisov certainly became aware of jazz music through the study of Shostakovich's 1930's works for variety orchestra. Additionally, there may have been some direct contact and influence with jazz through Denisov's association with Shostakovich, who was the chairman of the light music committee in the 1960's. Yet it is uncertain to what degree this may have existed. The 1948 resolution by the Central Committee condemning the music of Shostakovich, while devastating to Shostakovich, served as a greater impetus for his student Denisov.

Not only did Denisov condemn the 1948 resolution as "wrong", he and his fellow students "had to lock up themselves in a classroom to play a Shostakovich symphony or a Prokofiev sonata."<sup>66</sup> These actions as well as a series of challenging articles written by Denisov, such as *Once More on the Youth Education*, demonstrated he was not easily detoured by the political ideology of the Party, but had instead formed strong opinions about the human pursuit of musical truth.

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<sup>66</sup> Kholopov, 6.

From an early age, Denisov was in contact with many influential, musical forces, including jazz. The fact that popular, western music, like jazz, was not officially part of his academic study should not imply that these influences were not readily available for study.

New music, such as jazz and popular music, indicated creative freedom for the composer. However, the Central Communist Committee often viewed musical freedom and political freedom as the same entity. Denisov had been influenced by the melodic and rhythmic freedoms of folk music as a boy. The concept of musical freedom was central in Denisov's life. Of this area he once stated:

Freedom is a major precondition for creative work. But freedom can be achieved only through perfection. Profoundly studying traditions and experimenting in various fields of modern musical art, the composer achieves a freedom that enables him to speak earnestly. Each composer, sooner or later, reveals his own style, creating a synthesis of various types of contemporary music-writing technique.<sup>67</sup>

Already predisposed to the melodic and rhythmic freedoms presented in folk music, Denisov was sensitive to other musical styles, which shared common traits. Here one can truly sense the duality of Denisov's character. As a mathematician he was highly analytical, searching for clear definitions, perfection, order and definitive conclusions. Yet, as a composer he was guided by a highly inventive and emotional spirit. As a whole, Denisov would identify and

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<sup>67</sup> S. Bradshaw. "Edison Denisov," *Contemporary Composers*, rev. ed, pg. 218.

draw parallels between folk music and works from master composers, jazz music, and mathematics.

### **Thoughts On and Use of Jazz Music in Compositions**

Denisov's ability to draw parallels between jazz and other musical styles and techniques was quite articulate. Of jazz music he stated:

“I'm quite fond of jazz. It is genuine art. Louis Armstrong and Miles Davis are true great musicians. Miles Davis is my favorite musician; his harmonic thinking is as refined as Debussy's. Top-level jazz makes use of all the means of modern music. The only difference is in the material and the principles of employment. As for the techniques, these are the same collage and twelve-note procedure.”<sup>68</sup>

In his correspondence with noted saxophonist Jean Marie-Londeix the composer acknowledged his love and knowledge of the works of other jazz musicians including Duke Ellington, Thelonius Monk and Oscar Peterson.<sup>69</sup>

Perhaps the greatest indication of his knowledge and synthesis of jazz music came in a 1968 article, *New Music and Jazz* written for the quarterly journal of the International Music Council, *The World of Music*. In this article Denisov made a number of insightful statements about the usage of jazz, the

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<sup>68</sup> Kholopov, 156.

<sup>69</sup> Umble, *Jean-Marie Londeix: Master of the Modern Saxophone*, 53.

parallels of jazz and folk music, and the integration of jazz in the works of master composers from the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Answering the question of the incorporation of jazz into modern composition, Denisov wrote:

Jazz has now so firmly taken root in contemporary music that this question [as to the extent of its use in modern composition] is no longer open to discussion. The adoption of this or that element of jazz in composition is the personal problem of each author (in the same way as the attitude to folk music). Some composers regard jazz as a primitive form of art and consider that an appeal to jazz forms is a concession to the taste of the public (many have reproached Stravinsky and Bartok with unnecessary “folklorism”), others are convinced that there are not artificial limits to the scope of contemporary music and that any forms of the primitive can be integrated by the composer.<sup>70</sup>

Today we can observe not only a tendency toward a synthesis of different arts-theatre, cinema, painting, music, etc.-but also an effacement of the boundaries between arts with different social functions. Therefore, we should not become snobs and merely because many people regard folk music and jazz as primitive forms of art, shut the door on their natural penetration in to serious music.<sup>71</sup>

Denisov also articulates the symbiotic relationship of folk and jazz elements and their use in the works of others:

We know that the simplest way of organizing a lengthy and protracted form is the use of one type or another of ostinato. This method was exhausted to satiety in the classical music and also in the neo-classicism of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Stravinsky, Shostakovich, Orff and others). But jazz provides us with new forms of ostinato, not all of which (especially those in the finest works of avant-garde jazz) have yet been investigated by the composer.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Denisov, *New Music and Jazz*.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 30.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 32



Many complex ostinati in late Stravinsky are linked, for example, not only with the polyrhythmic ostinato of Russian folk music, but also, and to a greater extent, with the transformation of certain techniques of jazz performance. Motor rhythms, ostinato in general and also the play of displaced accentuation make easy and organic the introduction of this or that element of jazz into music that is devoid of the jazz quality.<sup>73</sup>

Perhaps the most poignant of his observations comes in his discussion of jazz rhythm:

Naturally, jazz does not in any way provide a recipe for rescuing music from rhythmic amorphousness, but it shows one of the possible paths towards a greater variety in the rhythmic organization of the musical material. Another reason why jazz music assimilates itself so naturally to the new music is its organic improvisatory nature. We endeavor with all our might to bring freedom, in all its manifestations, into music: we leave the various components of the form unfixed, we create an image of musical mosaics (group technique), we renounce any kind of determinateness, either of the whole form or of its separate parts (musical graphics), while in folk music and in jazz the prototypes of all these freedoms have existed for a long time.<sup>74</sup>

Within the context of this presentation on rhythm Denisov gives light to the elements of what makes jazz captivating to the listener and useful to the composer. One can see the following statement as not only a definition of a jazz performance but also a definition of swing (that elusive element found only in jazz):

If in the age of romanticism the listener often preferred the enfeebled sentimentality of the musical utterance (“music should caress the ear”-and

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 35.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 33.

it did indeed caress the ear), today activity and impulsiveness are almost indispensable conditions of communicability.

Pointed and displaced rhythms, and the confrontation of an apparently arrhythmic improvisation with a basic rhythm that always restores the time-pulse presents us with a conflict of different relationships to musical time, and a dialectic of the interaction of the process, different in intention, of its articulation. This now captivates and intrigues the listener much more than primitive methods of ostinato intensification.<sup>75</sup>

Denisov's observations in this article demonstrate a curious involvement with jazz music; his specific comments on jazz, in particularly rhythm and the relationship between modern composition and the avant-garde jazz movement are quite insightful. Throughout the article are photos identifying key Soviet jazz musicians such as Georgij Garanjan, Aladar Pege and Vadim Ludvikovsky as well as a featured photo of American saxophonist Leo Wright in performance with German composer Boris Balcher.

Additionally, the Denisov article shows a unique awareness of current musical events, a contradiction to the popular view that all Soviet musicians were cut off from advancements in the West. It should be noted that following Denisov's article in this journal is an in-depth piece by German jazz critic and historian Joquim Berendt about the infusion of avant-garde jazz into popular culture.

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<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 34.

The article *New Music and Jazz* serves as a landmark in Denisov's individual style of composition that is highlighted by a synthesis of popular influences, highly rhythmic writing and tonal illusions within a 12-tone context.

Denisov had already demonstrated his ability to synthesize non-classical elements, such as folk and jazz music, as early as 1956 with his opera *Ivan the Soldier*, which features folk melodies and rhythms. His use of quasi-improvisatory elements, taken from western avant-garde music in his groundbreaking work *The Sun of the Incas* (1964) further demonstrates his ability to infuse elements from western and popular music, in subtle ways without overtly copying them.<sup>76</sup>

Where many critics and historians, including Bradshaw, recognize the synthesis of jazz into Denisov's compositions, they cite his settings for voice and instrumental ensemble, *La vie en rouge*, as one of the earliest works to use jazz. Where the overtones of jazz are used in an impressive fashion throughout this work, other pieces, including the *Sonata*, predate *La vie en rouge* in the incorporation of jazz elements.

Denisov openly used jazz elements including the use of a jazz-theatre orchestra (tenor, soprano clarinet, alto saxophone, trumpet, trombone, percussion,

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<sup>76</sup> Bradshaw, *The Music of Edison Denisov*, 5.

piano, double bass, Brecht text) in his 1968 work *Fünf Geschichten von Herrn Keuner*. He proudly states this fact in his article, *New Music and Jazz*:

Having chosen a small jazz theatre-orchestra I employ jazz techniques only in the framing movements-in the first and the fifth. If in the first movement the devices of jazz instrumentation in large measure take away the “seriousness” of the text and reveal all its paradoxically, the smooth regularity of the rhythm of “Wenn die Haifische Menschen waren” and the form of the jazz passacaglia help to make a unified whole out of the very lengthy and stratified prose text, and to create an impression of idyllic tranquility and pretended happiness.<sup>77</sup>

Also predating *La vie an Rouge*, in the use of jazz elements, is his 1970 *Sonata for Alto Saxophone and Piano*. Written for saxophonist Jean-Marie Londeix the *Sonata*, “is one of the most characteristic compositions in which Denisov’s style comes close to jazz.”<sup>78</sup> Denisov would continue to draw upon jazz and popular elements throughout his compositions well into the 1980’s and 1990’s.

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<sup>77</sup> Denisov, *New Music and Jazz*, 36.

<sup>78</sup> Khopolov, 110.

## Chapter 4

### **Jazz and Its Influence Upon the *Sonata for Alto Saxophone and Piano***

“If we can observe an underlying principle, it has an objective reality, and we are therefore fully justified in investigating it and regarding it as part of the compositional process. The deeper we penetrate the musical fabric of a work, the more subtle and profound are the principles we uncover.”<sup>79</sup>

In the first sixty years of the Soviet era the “opinion towards [the] saxophone was [that it was] either a somewhat trivial instrument, suitable only for light, entertaining music, or a capitalistic instrument, dangerous in and of itself.”

<sup>80</sup> With the exception of a brief period from 1965-1967, in which the Military Conducting department at the Moscow Conservatory taught the saxophone, few Russians knew of the concert abilities of the saxophone. Not until 1970, when the celebrated French saxophonist Jean-Marie Londeix presented a series of influential recitals in Moscow and Leningrad, did composers and players alike witness the full artistic depth and breadth of the saxophone.

The seeds for the creation of the *Sonata for Alto Saxophone and Piano* were sewn on March 24, 1970 when Jean-Marie Londeix and Edison Denisov had a chance meeting at the Composers’ House in Moscow. After an impromptu

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<sup>79</sup> Edison Denisov, “The Compositional Process,” *Tempo*, n.s. 105 (1973) : 2.

<sup>80</sup> Stacy Maugans, “The History of the Saxophone in St. Petersburg, Russia,” *The Saxophone Symposium* 26 (2001) : 56.

demonstration of the saxophone by Londeix, Denisov agreed to write a work for the French saxophonist.<sup>81</sup>

### **The *Sonata*: A Turning Point**

The *Sonata* was completed on August 5, 1970 and premiered at The Second World Saxophone Congress in Chicago on December 14, 1970 by Jean-Marie Londeix with Milton Grainger on piano. Londeix commented on the importance and power of this work: “The *Sonata for Alto Saxophone and Piano* by Edison Denisov opened the saxophone to avant-garde contemporary music in a way that no other piece had ever done.”<sup>82</sup> Immediately after the premier Londeix would write in his diary “...as the last note ended, the room immediately stood and gave us a long ovation. I cannot even count the number of students asking for information about coming to study with me.”<sup>83</sup>

The *Sonata* was Denisov’s first solo composition for the saxophone and, with the assistance of Londeix, his first work to be published in the west.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> Umble, *Jean-Marie Londeix: Master of the Modern Saxophone*, 222.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 222.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 102

<sup>84</sup> The *Sonata for Alto Saxophone and Piano* is published by the Leduc Publishing Company, Paris.

Although the work has sustained great popularity among saxophonists, Denisov never listed the *Sonata* among his most successful pieces.<sup>85</sup>

### **The *Sonata* and Points of Contention**

Where much has been written about the *Sonata*, including extensive discussion and analysis of serial procedures and impetus for the creation of the work, contrasting views exist about Denisov's true knowledge of the saxophone, the importance and extent of jazz influence on the *Sonata*, and the sources for the material that shape its various movements. Discussions about jazz and its influence upon the *Sonata* have been general in scope and relegated to being a by-product of a greater serial compositional procedure. Before one can begin to explore and identify the influence of jazz upon the *Sonata for Alto Saxophone and Piano* a few points of contention should be discussed.

The *Sonata* is recognized as Edison Denisov's first solo composition for saxophone. Yet it is not the first of his compositions to use or feature the saxophone.<sup>86</sup> Denisov's work *Fünf Geschichten vom Herrn Keuner* (1966), based upon a text by Brecht, utilized the alto saxophone in a jazz ensemble that

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<sup>85</sup> Jonathan Helton, "Edison Denisov's Sonata for saxophone and Piano: An Analysis for the Performer," *The Saxophone Symposium* 25 (2000) : 16.

<sup>86</sup> Author James Umble, in his work *Jean-Marie Londeix: Master of the Modern Saxophone* wrote, "He [Denisov] had never written for the saxophone previously..."-pg. 223.

included trumpet, piccolo, clarinet, trombone, percussion, double bass, and tenor voice.

### **Denisov, The Saxophone and Jazz Influence**

Considering the social and political views of the saxophone in the Soviet Union, as well as Denisov's involvement with the instrument as both a patron and composer in the underground arts movement, the concept of jazz influence in the *Sonata for Alto Saxophone* is really not an unusual one. The saxophone was largely ignored as a classical instrument but enjoyed a rather prominent place in the forbidden "popular" music that existed in the underground music movement.

"During such difficult years, the saxophone continued to be a popular instrument underground and even surfaced in the media and entertainment world through circuitous means. Utesov used anti-American satire in theater as medium for jazz performance. Underground jazz and saxophone playing succeeded because the officials assigned to root it out actually like it."<sup>87</sup>

Lev Mikhailov, professor of saxophone at the Moscow Conservatory further illuminated this point, "Prior to 1970, the saxophone was totally ignored by educational administrators in the U.S.S.R. Jazz saxophonists were for the most part self-taught clarinet players. Symphony orchestras, when it was necessary,

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<sup>87</sup> Maugans, 63.



employed orchestral clarinetists or jazz saxophonists. The instrument was unknown in chamber music concerts.”<sup>88</sup>

Given the role of the saxophone as a “jazz” instrument in Soviet musical circles, as well as Denisov’s interest and study of jazz music, it is only natural that jazz would be an integral part of his inaugural solo work for the saxophone. This point can be further punctuated by Jean-Marie Londeix and his description of the difficult artistic situation for Russian avant-garde composers:

“The avant-garde composers have a slightly larger audience today than in 1970. . .There were avant-garde artists and composers in 1970 but they were stifled and suppressed. . .No one really kept them from writing what they wanted to, but they couldn’t get their music played. No one was interested in their music. It was simply put away in drawers. I also saw very conservative painting exhibitions...it was probably worse in painting than in music...However, one could find in smaller, out-of-the-way places examples of very avant-garde, very advanced artistic thinking. In music, in order to find audiences, composers had to arrange for their music to be played in foreign countries, or else patiently wait for someone to perhaps discover them someday...”<sup>89</sup>

This observation raises an interesting hypothesis. Denisov, with Londeix’s invitation to create a work for saxophone, finally had the opportunity to have a work premiered and published outside the U.S.S.R. Furthermore, the instrument that would premier the work is closely allied with one of Denisov’s passions, jazz. One could view the *Sonata for Alto Saxophone and Piano* as Denisov’s opportunity to present a work for a forbidden instrument with influences from a

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<sup>88</sup> Ibid., 65.

<sup>89</sup> Umble, 101.

forbidden compositional style, jazz, to a receptive musical community away from the censorship and oppression of the U.S.S.R.

Conflicting statements have been made about the role of influence that jazz had played in the compositional process of Denisov. As noted in Chapter 3, many scholars have been inaccurate about the first inclusion of jazz elements/influence in Denisov's compositions. Author and historian Susan Bradshaw points to Denisov's 1973 work, *La vie en rouge*, as the first work that includes jazz elements.

Additionally, saxophonist Jonathan Helton in his article, *Edison Denisov's Sonata for Saxophone and Piano: An analysis for the Performer* (2000 Saxophone Symposium), stated, "It is interesting to note that Denisov does not number his saxophone sonata among his most successful pieces. Perhaps this is because the piece was something of an academic attempt at integrating jazz ideas into a serial context."<sup>90</sup>

This statement gives one the impression that Denisov had not attempted to include jazz elements in any compositions, serial or otherwise, before the Sonata in 1970. We know that with his 1964 work, *The Sun of the Incas*, Denisov began a mature compositional style that fully incorporated and utilized serial techniques. Additionally, Denisov discussed the importance and use of jazz elements in his

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<sup>90</sup> Helton, 16.

composition *Fünf Geschichten vom Herrn Keuner* (1966) in a 1968 article, entitled *New Music and Jazz*. Here he writes:

“The use of jazz ensemble in my *Fünf Geschichten vom Herrn Keuner* is explained above all by the specific character of the Brechtian text that always tend toward theatricality. Having chosen a small jazz theatre-orchestra, I employ jazz techniques only in the framing movements-in the first and the fifth. If in the first movement the devices of jazz instrumentation in large measure take away the ‘seriousness’ of the text and reveal all its paradoxically, the smooth regularity of the rhythm. . .and the form of the jazz passacaglia help to make a unified whole out of the very lengthy and stratified prose text, and to create an impression of idyllic tranquility and pretended happiness.”<sup>91</sup>

This statement, as well as others made about jazz in the article, clearly demonstrates his intense interest and study of jazz music. Additionally, the date of *Fünf Geschichten vom Herrn Keuner*, written in 1966, predates *La vie en rouge* by eight years and the *Sonata for Alto Saxophone and Piano* by four years.

Furthermore, Helton states that Denisov’s observations on jazz, stated in the article *New Music and Jazz*, were written, “shortly before the sonata was completed.”<sup>92</sup> This statement is inaccurate. According to diary records kept by Jean-Marie Londeix, the Sonata was created between March 24, 1970, when Londeix and Denisov first met, and October 10, 1970 when Londeix received the Sonata. The Denisov article in question, *New Music and Jazz*, was published in

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<sup>91</sup> Denisov, *New Music and Jazz*, 36.

<sup>92</sup> Helton, 16.

1968, two years before the 1970 meeting between Denisov and Londeix and the subsequent premier of the *Sonata*.

To some, the elapsed time between Denisov's article, *New Music and Jazz*, and his *Sonata for Alto Saxophone and Piano* is a trivial point. It is this author's belief that this time frame of two years, between observations stated in *New Music and Jazz* and the creation of the *Sonata for Alto Saxophone and Piano*, are critically important to the argument that Denisov was able to synthesize jazz elements and incorporate them in the *Sonata*.

Finally, contrary statements have been made concerning the areas of influence for the various movements. Saxophonists Jean-Marie Londeix, James Umble and Jonathan Helton have stated that, "He [Denisov] had never written for saxophone previously, and judging from the different styles of writing found in the three movements of this *Sonata*, he was carefully testing and exploring the expressive capabilities of the instrument. As a result, like Berio's *Sinfonia* (1968-1969), the three movements are clearly differentiated, each having its own particular musical language."<sup>93</sup>

This is in contrast to other scholars who believe jazz plays a unifying role in the work rather than being relegated to the third movement. Saxophonist Denise Dabney stated, "Denisov's compositional thinking and musical

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<sup>93</sup> Umble, 223.

organization reveals an interest and fascination with American jazz music. Although movement III is most directly influenced, procedural influences are apparent throughout.”<sup>94</sup>

Likewise, noted Denisov scholar and biographer, Yuri Kholopov, stated of the *Sonata*, “The word ‘saxophone’ is immediately associated with jazz. Denisov’s style is far from being alien to such elements of jazz as its sharp (rag) rhythms, melodic patterns reminiscent of the melodic contours of jazz improvisation. Its first movement carries some features similar to jazz improvisation. Likewise [in the first movement] the ‘iron rhythms’ [in the third movement] abound in all kinds of syncopation and other ‘misplacements’.”<sup>95</sup> This point of view would appear to parallel Denisov’s previous use of jazz in the outer movements of his *Fünf Geschichten vom Herrn Keuner* (1966).

As it will be discussed later in this thesis, a number of jazz elements including: comping, iso-rhythm, motor-rhythm, timbral elements and melodic contours can be found in both the first and the third movement of the *Sonata for Alto Saxophone and Piano*.

The *Sonata for Alto Saxophone and Piano* is a wonderful example of Denisov’s integration of tonal and serial material. Like Webern before him, Denisov uses ordered rows, subsets, and segments of those subsets as tonal

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<sup>94</sup> Denise C. Dabney. “A Multicultural Approach to Edison denisov’s Sonata: For alto saxophone and piano,” *The Saxophone Symposium* 20 (Spring-Summer-Fall 1995), 16.

<sup>95</sup> Khopolov, 111.

illusions in a greater, serial landscape. In his article, *The Compositional Process*, Denisov gave insight to his view:

In 12-tone and serial technique there are other guiding principles for organizing sound material; and over the years these have become increasingly sophisticated. Here we work with ‘sets’ of tones in the mathematical sense of the ordered ‘set’, and the process of composition lies in 1) the selection of segments from these sets; 2) organizing from these segments as succession of sub-set (for instance, of harmony); 3) the establishment of definite logical correlations, both between the segments of the chosen set (the establishment, for instance, of a pattern of consonant relationships) and between those sounds which are included in the complex of sub-sets (the organization of definite patterns of harmonic sequence, or the creation, for instance, of thematic and tonal relationships by intervals); and also 4) the ordering of this complex of sounds, precisely and coherently.<sup>96</sup>

It should be noted that most pitch material in the *Sonata*, especial in the outer movements, can be traced to a set, row order, subset or transposition of a poly-serial concept.<sup>97</sup> However, the question is not whether serial procedures are used in the work, rather how these elements are intended to be interpreted by the listener.

The above statement shows Denisov’s ability to “have his cake and eat it too” compositionally. By breaking with strict dodecaphonic procedures Denisov is able to have mathematical order as well as the ability to create tonal material

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<sup>96</sup> Denisov, *The Compositional Process*, 9.

<sup>97</sup> An indepth analysis of serial elements and their application to the *Sonata for Alto Saxophone and Piano* can be found in Johnathan Helton’s article “Edison Denisov’s Sonata for Saxophone and Piano: An Analysis for the Performer.” *The Saxophone Journal* 25 (2000): 16-37.

and emotional character within a poly-serial framework. It is this tonal material, jazz, that serves as a strong unifying factor in the work.

### **Movement III: The “Jazz” Movement**

Despite the myriad opinions concerning influence and impetus for the *Sonata*, some authors have broached the subject that the third movement, *Allegro moderato*, contains the greatest amount of jazz-influenced material. Although scored for alto saxophone and piano, the movement is in fact “a jazz trio for saxophone, piano and string bass, with the piano assuming the latter roles.”<sup>98</sup>

The movement is divided into four large, successive sections and is concluded with a coda (see Diagram B). Each section, with the exception of the third and coda, presents a jazz bass ostinato used in increasing complexity. The first section, which establishes the melodic and rhythmic tone of the movement, starts at measure 1 and continues through measure 20. Section two, highlighting Denisov’s development of the walking bass line, continues from measure 21 to the first half of measure 43. The third section presents a unison melodic line between the saxophone and piano in a bebop style beginning in the second half of measure 43 and continuing to measure 53. The highly energetic interplay between saxophone and piano is featured in the fourth section from the second

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<sup>98</sup> Umble, 224.

half of measure 53 to measure 75. Finally, the torrid chordal lines of the saxophone and piano are showcased in the coda section begins at measure 76 to the end of the piece.

Through the use of rhythm and serial procedures, in particular the use of poly-serial subsets and segments, Denisov is able to create melodic, harmonic and rhythmic statements of a highly jazz-like nature. Although none of these statements have a predetermined, harmonic or tonal function, they contribute to the presentation of a spontaneous, improvised-sounding movement. At times these statements are direct and apparent in their references, in others they only give the listener impressions of jazz and not direct quotations of influence.

**DIAGRAM B:** Sectional Map of Movement III.

mm. 1-20; ostinato 1-section 1



mm. 21-43; ostinato 2-section 2



mm. 43-53; "bebop tutti"-section 3



mm. 53-75; ostinato 3-section 4



mm. 76-85; coda section





### **Melodic Contour, Freedom and Effect**

One of the most striking elements of the third movement is the free, improvisatory feel of the melodic lines. With the bass lines (performed by the left hand of the piano) serving as a rhythmic foundation, the saxophone and right hand of the piano are able to weave and dart throughout the rhythmic fabric, creating melodic lines of a highly improvisational-sounding nature.

The opening statement of the saxophone, an original statement of the 12-tone row [P0], resembles the melodic contours of a jazz improvised line. As Denisov begins to develop the line, by combining the P0 and P2 rows, he blurs the boundaries of the 6/4 time signature, through creative note groupings, creating the impression of an improvised, free-flowing line. The effect of “playing across” the bar line is similar to lines created by such saxophonists as Stan Getz or Lee Konitz (see Example 8, pg 66). Although the source material is from serial procedures the jazz influence is “ its primary rhythmic, harmonic and melodic impulse.”<sup>99</sup>

As the movement develops, the saxophone is engaged by the right hand of the piano (ms. 8) in an ever-developing, highly energetic, melodic interplay. Initially beginning as a call and response between the two voices, their entrances quicken, often overlapping, creating a colorful pastiche of sound. Much like the

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<sup>99</sup> Dabney, 13.

opening statement by the saxophone, both voices (piano right hand and saxophone) defy the structure of the bar line, again through unique note groupings, and create a seamless, improvisatory line (see Example 9, pg. 68).

Example 8: Improvisational melodic contour

The image displays two staves of musical notation in treble clef. The first staff begins with a measure number '4' and contains a melodic line starting with a forte 'f' dynamic. A red box labeled 'PO' (Phrase One) encompasses the first two measures of this staff. The second staff begins with a measure number '5' and continues the melodic line. A red box labeled 'P2' (Phrase Two) encompasses the second measure of this staff. Both staves feature complex rhythmic patterns with many beamed notes and accidentals, and are marked with a forte 'f' dynamic at the beginning and end of the phrases.

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Another way Denisov is able to create a sense of improvisational freedom and instability is through the “expansion of the sphere of proportions of form.”<sup>100</sup> By using non-traditional rhythmic proportions such as 5:4, 5:6, 7:6, etc., Denisov is able to mathematically control the flexibility of the melodic line while creating

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<sup>100</sup> Khopolov, 46.

a spontaneous, sliding rhythmic tension between the voices. This technique is used in the above mentioned saxophone/piano melodic dual, (mm.21-43).

Beginning in ms. 37 both voices begin a flurry of sixteenth notes, often in contrary motion, only to be interrupted by a tutti ensemble passage in ms. 43. This section, mm.43-53, is perhaps the most direct quotation from jazz found in the work. Although the tutti line is presented in an older pre-bop, dotted-rhythm notation, the rhythmic and melodic content, with its extensive use of accented triplets, unison lines and quick tempo is reminiscent of bebop. These unison lines are interrupted by free-sounding piano lines that again use non-traditional spheres of proportions, including: 7:6, 5:6 and 5:4 (see Example 10, pg. 69).

Denisov is able to selectively enforce the jazz feeling of the melodic lines through the use of timbral effects strategically placed throughout the movement. This “use of idiomatic gestures in the saxophone [and piano] such as glissandi, growls, and ‘blue’ notes appearing as appoggiaturas, is further evidence of borrowing, imitation, and assimilation of the jazz idiom.”<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> Dabney, 14.

Example 9: Melodic interplay between saxophone and piano

The musical score consists of three systems, each with three staves. The top staff is for the saxophone, and the bottom two staves are for the piano. The first system starts at measure 29. The saxophone part features a melodic line with slurs and a glissando marked 'gliss.' in measure 30. Dynamics include *p* and *mf*. The piano accompaniment has a bass line with slurs and a dotted line with an '8' above it. The second system starts at measure 30. The saxophone part continues with slurs and dynamics *mp* and *p*. The piano accompaniment has a bass line with slurs and a dynamic of *f*. The third system starts at measure 31. The saxophone part has slurs and a dynamic of *f*, with a glissando marked '5:4' at the end. The piano accompaniment has a bass line with slurs.

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Example 10: “Bebop” tutti section

The musical score for Example 10, titled "Bebop" tutti section, is presented in two systems. The first system, starting at measure 51, shows a piano part with a right hand playing eighth-note triplets and a left hand with eighth notes. The second system, starting at measure 52, continues the piano part with a more complex rhythmic pattern and includes dynamic markings such as "cresc." and "espressivo". The score is written in a key with one flat and a common time signature.

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Denisov is able to create a melodic instability, similar to the confrontation of major and minor, found in blues, through the linear chromaticism. Through the repetition of a single pitch and its resolution to a chromatic neighboring tone (mm. 9-11, 21-23 saxophone part) or through the creation of an iso-rhythm consisting of two pitches (mm.18-20 saxophone part), Denisov is able to create the effect of melodic instability without the direct appearance of harmony (see Example 11).

### Example 11: Linear chromaticism

The image shows a musical score for three staves. The first staff is marked *mp* and has two red circles with arrows pointing to them, labeled "Confrontation". The second staff has a red box around the first few notes labeled "Enclosure", and two red circles with arrows labeled "Confrontation". The third staff has four red circles with arrows labeled "Confrontation".

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Through the use of appoggiaturas in the saxophone (mm. 22, 26, 44-45) and piano (mm. 44-45, 50) Denisov is able to imply the earthy, blues-like qualities of jazz. In two instances Denisov directly uses segments from the blues scale, first in ms. 25 in the right hand of the piano and in the aforementioned bebop tutti section, ms. 50, in all voices. In both instances this “blues lick” is prepared by the “blues appoggiaturas” (see Example 12, pg. 71).

To further enforce the jazz quality of the movement, the appoggiaturas are often incorporated with timbral effects, such as glissandos and slap tongue articulations. Occurring over a texture in which the piano is playing both a pizzicato jazz bass line, with the left hand, and jazz chord voicing, with the right

hand, the unifying effect is clearly jazz-like. The addition of a flutter tongue or growl, beginning in ms. 69, helps to further reinforce the “earthy” jazz-like quality, creating an energy that helps punctuate the improvisatory, jazz character of the various sections (see Example 13, pg. 72)

Example 12: Blues appoggiaturas and blues quotation

The image displays two systems of musical notation, each consisting of a treble and bass staff. The first system begins at measure 45. A red circle highlights a specific melodic phrase in the treble staff. The second system begins at measure 50. A red circle highlights a melodic phrase in the treble staff, with a red arrow pointing to it from the label "Blues Appoggiaturas". Another red circle highlights a different melodic phrase in the treble staff, with a red arrow pointing to it from the label "Blues Lick". The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, ties, and dynamic markings like *pp* and *poco rubato*. There are also some unusual time signature changes indicated by "7:6" and "5:6".

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### Example 13: Timbral effects

Timbral Effects

The image shows a musical score for saxophone with three staves. The first staff (measures 21-23) has a dynamic marking of *p*. The second staff (measures 24-25) has dynamic markings of *mp* and *mf*. The third staff (measures 26-27) has a dynamic marking of *p*. Red annotations highlight specific timbral effects: a red circle around a slur in measure 24 labeled "Blues Appoggiaturas"; a red circle around a slur in measure 25 labeled "5:6"; a red circle around a slur in measure 26 labeled "5:6"; and a red circle around a slur in measure 27 labeled "5:6". Other annotations include "slp" (slap-tonguing) and "gliss." (glissando) above slurs in measures 24 and 26. A red line labeled "Timbral Effects" points to these annotations.

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It should be noted that use of timbral effects such as slap-tonguing, glissandos and flutter tongue/growls had been commonly used in avant-garde composition throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and some debate has risen as to the true nature of their inclusion in this work. Saxophonist Jean-Marie Londeix in his teaching diary noted, “Upon accepting the proposition [to write a piece for saxophone], he [Denisov] asked to send him a tape recording demonstrating the idiomatic possibilities of the instrument. When I returned to France, I taped any



and all sounds I could play on the saxophone, both typical and extended, and sent him the tape. He received it on May 9<sup>th</sup>, 1970.”<sup>102</sup>

This statement might lead one to believe that the timbral effects included in the third movement of the *Sonata* are an influence from 20<sup>th</sup> century Avant-Garde composition. However, one could equally make the argument that based on Denisov’s stated goals and interest in jazz, that the three timbral effects used in this movement (glissando, slap tongue and flutter tongue/growl) have been closely associated with the development of the saxophone in jazz music.

Slap tongue articulation, growling and glissandos were commonly used in the more popular aspects of the saxophone, especially those of the 1920’s, 30’s and 40’s by such artists as Johnny Hodges, Benny Carter, Bud Johnson, Sidney Bechet and Coleman Hawkins. The impetus for the inclusion of these elements, in the *Sonata*, may not come from “origin” as much as “context” in which the material is being used. Clearly, these elements are the most concentrated in the third movement, which simultaneously present other elements from the jazz language.

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<sup>102</sup> Umble, 222.

## Tonal Illusions and Harmonic Gestures

Where it has been recognized that the *Sonata* incorporates a number of serial elements, the work does not adhere to strict dodecaphonic procedures. Often melodic lines and note clusters are created through the poly-serial combinations of two or more row forms. Additionally, one can see the appearance of tertian arpeggios, jazz harmonies (especially dominant seventh and dominant seventh, sharp nine chords), and melodic lines that give tonal illusions to an implied harmony.

In the opening statement of movement three, the saxophone presents the Po version of the row. We know that Denisov took great care in creating this row. He stated:

In serial music it is the final choice of the series which, as a guideline, does not occur fortuitously but binds the general ideas of the work in approximately the same relation as thematicism in music of previous epochs.<sup>103</sup>

Through chromatic tones, passing tones and half-step approaches, inherent to the construction of this row, this melodic line resembles the melodic contours of a jazz line outlining a C7 or C9 tonality. By blurring the boundaries of the 6/4 time signature, through creative note groupings, the melody line

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<sup>103</sup> Denisov, *The Compositional Process*, 4.

transcends the bar line, creating the impression of an improvised jazz line (see Example 14).

Supporting this melodic line is a six note, jazz-inspired bass ostinato in the piano. This ostinato is created from three pitches from I3 (order numbers 9,10,11) and three from P10 (order numbers 3,4,5). This base line outlines a tonality in C, with the inclusion of the root, flat nine, flat third and an enclosure (a melodic device in which an object note is approached by both the upper and lower leading tones) that punctuates the leading tone “b”. The use of an enclosure can also be found in the melodic, saxophone line in pitches 10, 11, and 12 (see Example 14).

Example 14: Tonal illusions in saxophone and bass ostinato

The image shows a musical score for Example 14. It consists of two staves: a treble clef staff for the saxophone and a bass clef staff for the piano. The saxophone line is marked with a forte dynamic (*f*) and a triplet of eighth notes. The notes are annotated with labels: C9: Root, b7th, 5th, 3rd, and 9th. A red box labeled "Enclosure" highlights the final two notes of the saxophone line. The bass line is a six-note ostinato, with notes annotated as C9: Root, b9, b3/#9, and L.T. (Leading Tone). Red circles and boxes highlight these specific notes and intervals.

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Many authors have made reference to this melodic line, as an example of an inclusion of a jazz element that is devoid a jazz quality. As it pertained to jazz, Denisov identified how the modern composer could capture such freedoms without directly quoting from the idiom, “The play of displaced accentuation make easy and organic the introduction of this or that element of jazz into music that is devoid of the jazz quality.”<sup>104</sup>

Upon closer examination, one can see that Denisov is able to create tonal illusions devoid of jazz quality by obscuring them through the careful selection and omission of accents. By removing or displacing a natural accentuation, commonly used in a jazz performance, and combining this line with a decrescendo the tonal implication is diminished, and Denisov is able to capture an improvisatory sound without direct quotation. The effect “of an apparently arrhythmic improvisation with a basic rhythm [bass ostinato] that always restores the time-pulse” is clearly presented. One can see, in Example 15, pg. 77, that when the natural jazz accentuation is replaced, the implication of the C7 or C9 tonality is much more clear.

Beyond this opening melodic line and the aforementioned inclusion of blues quotes, Denisov utilizes a number of harmonic gestures quite effectively

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<sup>104</sup> Denisov, *New Music and Jazz*, 35.

throughout the third movement. One of the first appearances of these tonal illusions occurs in the end of ms. 17. As the statement of the saxophone's row begins to break down rhythmically, the piano begins a series of descending arpeggiations, with minor chords in the right hand and major chords in the left. This occurs again in section two of the movement, beginning in ms. 34, in sections four (ms. 68) (piano) and in the coda section ms. 76, in which both the saxophone and piano engage in jazz arpeggiation that outlines dominant tonalities. Although there are clear tertian harmonies, there is no harmonic function (see Example 16, pg. 78).

Example 15: Jazz interpretation of saxophone line, *Sonata*, Movt. III



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### Example 16: Jazz arpeggiation

The image displays two systems of musical notation for piano accompaniment, labeled 17 and 18. Each system consists of a treble and bass clef staff. Red circles highlight specific arpeggiated chords in both staves of each system. Above the treble staff of system 17, the following chords are labeled: E min, Eb min, D min, and C# min. Below the bass staff of system 17, the following chords are labeled: Db Maj, C Maj, and B Maj. Above the treble staff of system 18, the following chords are labeled: C min, B min, Bb min, and A min. Below the bass staff of system 18, the following chords are labeled: Bb Maj, A Maj, Ab Maj, and G maj. A dynamic marking of *f* is present at the end of system 18.

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However, it is the appearance of chords, in a piano comping style, that gives the greatest implication of jazz harmony. Denisov's first introduction of comping occurs in ms. 7 in response to the saxophone's long melodic statement. This D major seventh chord breaks through the linear texture, punctuating the end of the saxophone statement and announcing a more melodically active right hand. Throughout the movement, Denisov utilizes chords, particularly dominant and

dominant-sharp nine chords, as a means of textural relief to the highly melodic saxophone line.

Dominant seven sharp nine chords, which are used frequently in jazz to imply a blues character, appear in the “bebop” tutti section (ms. 47 and mm. 52-54) and help to enforce the improvisational quality of the passage. As the saxophone and piano begin a highly rhythmic fourth section (mm. 53-75), sharp nine chords are used in combination with dominant chords a half step away. Denisov duplicates the chromatic planing of a jazz pianist by combining these chords with non-traditional rhythmic ratios of 6:5, 5:6 and 5:4. Again, there is no clear harmonic function, yet the texture of these chords, presented in a highly syncopated rhythmic fashion, presents a clear jazz influence (see Example 17, pg. 80).

Example 17: Comping and chromatic planing

The musical score consists of three systems of piano accompaniment. The first system (measures 52-53) features a melodic line with a *f* *espressivo* dynamic. The piano accompaniment includes chords Eb7#9, E7#9, and D7#9, with a 5:6 interval indicated. The second system (measures 53-54) is marked *quasi gliss. a Tempo* and *pp*. It shows a sequence of chords: D7#9, Db7#9, A7#9 (with 4:3 interval), Ab7#9, and G7#9. A red arrow points to the piano accompaniment with the label "Chromatic Comping". The third system (measure 54) shows a *f* dynamic with a "Comping" label pointing to a specific chord voicing.

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## Rhythmic Devices

Denisov recognized the freedom that jazz rhythm could bring to a modern composition. He wrote, “Naturally, jazz does not in any way provide a recipe for rescuing music from rhythmic amorphousness, but it shows one of the possible paths towards a greater variety in the rhythmic organization of the music material.”<sup>105</sup> In regards to the use of jazz ostinatos he wrote, “We know that the simplest way of organizing a lengthy and protracted form is the use of one type or another of ostinato. Jazz provides us with new forms of ostinato, not all of which (especially those in the finest works of avant garde jazz) have yet been investigated by composers.”<sup>106</sup>

Movement three begins with a repetitive, six-note bass ostinato that creates a strong rhythmic foundation. In turn, Denisov freely weaves melodic lines in the saxophone and right hand of piano that defies the strict rhythm set by the ostinato. This first ostinato serves as a “groove-oriented” bass line creating a strong, rhythmic foundation that clearly outlines the parameters of the 6/4 time signatures (see Example 18a-18c, pg. 83).

The rhythmic illusion of a double time feel is created when the saxophone line enters in ms. 3. The opening statement of the bass line grounds the listener with a quarter note pulse. After the saxophone enters with sixteenth notes,

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<sup>105</sup> Denisov, *New Music and Jazz*, 32.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

followed by the right hand of the piano, the sonic impression is shifted to that of an eighth-note ground pulse or a tempo being double of what is written. Not until ms. 21, when the second bass ostinato is stated with a less active saxophone line, does the quarter note ground pulse return.

Denisov utilizes the bass ostinato again in section two (mm. 21-43). However, in this section the bass ostinati are not confined within the bar lines as in the first section. Rather, this ostinato is presented with greater fluidity, in a “walking” bass line style that extends over the barline (see Examples 18a-18c, pg. 83). Unlike the first bass ostinato, which serves to stabilize and define the rhythmic parameters of the 6/4 time signature, these ostinati create a consistent pulse with more forward motion and greater rhythmic ambiguity through irregular note grouping. This leads to greater flexibility in the rhythmic pulse while groupings of four notes and three create rhythmic ambiguity by defying the 6/4 time signature.

After an absence in section three, the walking bass line ostinato appears again in section four (ms 57) (see Examples 18a-18c, pg. 83). This time, Denisov creates an aural illusion of 4/4 time by omitting accents from the ostinato note groupings and placing a punctuated  $C7\#9$  chord in the piano immediately after the statement of the seven-note ostinato. The listener is led to believe this bass line is in a 4/4-meter instead of the notated 6/4-meter (see example 19, pg. 84).

Example 18a-18c: Jazz ostinatos

18a) Section 1 “Groove” ostinato (ms. 1)



18b) Section 2 Walking bass line ostinato (mm.21-22)



18c) Section 4 Bass ostinato



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Example 19: Rhythmic illusions

53 *trist gliss.* **a Tempo**

4:3

*pp* Rhythmic Illusion: Sounds Like...

Beat: 1 & 2 & 3 &

54 Pick-up to beat 1

Rhythmic Illusion: Sounds Like...

Beat: 1

4 Beat: 1 & 2 & 3 & 4 1 &

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The relationship between a basic rhythmic foundation and arrhythmic or freely improvised lines is not only central to this piece; it is central to the rhythmic foundation of jazz itself. Denisov recognized this point:

Pointed and displaced rhythms, and the confrontation of an apparently arrhythmic improvisation with a basic rhythm that always restores the

time-pulse presents us with a conflict of different relationships to musical time, and a dialectic of the interaction of the process, different in intention, of its articulation. This now captivates and intrigues the listener much more than primitive methods of ostinato intensification.<sup>107</sup>

With the opening statements by the saxophone, the concept of a departure and return to a stabilizing rhythmic force is created through a relationship between an improvisatory melodic line (saxophone and right hand of the piano) and grounded rhythmic foundation (bass ostinato). This relationship is strengthened through the use of other rhythmic devices such as cross rhythm, rhythmic anticipation or syncopation, all of which can be found with great frequency in this movement.

Denisov is able to create such rhythmic excitement through the careful placement and application of accents, note groupings, and iso-rhythmic figures. He is able to control the density and effect of jazz-like rhythmic elements such as cross-rhythm and syncopation through the use or omission such accents and careful placement of note groupings.

In a series of instructional essays, included in the James Umble book *Jean-Marie Londeix: Master of the Modern Saxophone*, Jean-Marie Londeix commented on the complexity of attack:

“The musical demands here [in the third movement] are based on several parameters of ...the quality of attacks, where clear differentiation between

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<sup>107</sup> Ibid., 34.

the wide variety of notated articulations is of utmost importance. The greatest difficulty resides in the mastery and clear rendering of each of these parameters, but especially in clearly and consistently differentiating between the variety of attacks. These ideas regarding the interpretation of the attacks must be consistently rendered by both performers on every note and at every dynamic level.”<sup>108</sup>

Throughout the third movement, Denisov is able to create a highly rhythmic atmosphere through three common processes: 1) the creation of syncopation and cross rhythm through attack or accents, 2) the creation of syncopation and cross rhythm through note groupings (using little or no accent) and 3) the creation of syncopation and cross-rhythm through the combination of note groupings and accents. The result is a highly complex rhythmic tapestry, which is obviously the focus of importance in this movement.

From the onset of the movement Denisov is able to highlight the improvisatory element of the saxophone line through the specific placement of accents. The addition of syncopation is highlighted in mm. 6-10 through the use of accents. Applied to the melodic line marked *pp*, the accents illuminate the syncopations, while the soft dynamic underplays their severity. In ms. 11-18, Denisov utilizes accents again to underscore the addition of cross-rhythm created in the piano. Here the accents punctuate the cross rhythm and illuminate the tertian elements found in the piano (see Example 20).

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<sup>108</sup> Umble, 225.

Example 20: Cross rhythm, syncopation and rhythmic anticipation

The image displays a musical score for four measures (11-14) in a piano arrangement. The score is written in treble and bass clefs. Red arrows and labels highlight specific rhythmic features:

- Measure 11:** Two instances of "Syncopation" are marked with red arrows pointing to notes in the treble clef. A "Cross-Rhythm" label with a red arrow points to a note in the bass clef.
- Measure 12:** Two instances of "Syncopation" are marked with red arrows pointing to notes in the treble clef. A "Cross-Rhythm" label with a red arrow points to a note in the bass clef.
- Measure 13:** A "Cross-Rhythm" label with a red arrow points to a note in the bass clef.
- Measure 14:** A "Rhythmic Anticipation" label with a red arrow points to a note in the treble clef. A dynamic marking of *mp* is present at the end of the measure.

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Another way Denisov is able to control the intensity of the syncopations and cross-rhythms is to omit any sense of accent and allow the desired effect to be created via note groupings. After the initial use of accents in the first section of the movement (mm.1-21) Denisov begins to omit accents, commonly used in section one, in section two (mm. 21-43). This first begins to appear in the right hand of the piano in ms. 23, and later moves to both voices by ms. 31.

Throughout this section the saxophone and right hand of the piano are engaged in a highly active melodic duel. The omission of accents lessens the severity of the cross-rhythms as well as the syncopation found in the saxophone line, yet it does not disguise the presence of these rhythmic elements. Rather Denisov is able to replicate spontaneity and rhythmic subtlety in the voices and while not disturbing the improvisatory, forward motion of the lines.

After the presentation of a unison, bebop tutti section (mm. 43-53), the saxophone and piano begin a highly energetic and syncopated fourth section (mm. 53-75). In call and response fashion, the saxophone and piano interject melodic segments. Accents are judiciously used to punctuate the jazz comping figures in the piano and dotted jazz figures in the saxophone. Not until ms. 63 do the saxophone and piano both execute accented figures. In this measure, accents illuminate the syncopated figures of the saxophone as well as the poly choral use of dominant seventh and sharp-nine chords in the piano. This creates rhythmic



tension and excitement in the form of a rhythmic crescendo, building in intensity until the statement of coda in ms. 76.

One of the ways Denisov maintains the driving rhythmic pulse of this movement is through the use of iso-rhythmic figures. These figures serve to maintain the rhythmic energy of movement as well as serve as a foundation for more adventurous rhythmic explorations.

Beginning in ms. 6 Denisov uses iso-rhythmic figures to maintain the driving sixteenth-note melodic motion that is set against the sparseness of the bass ostinato. In ms. 18 the iso-rhythm set by the saxophone serves to stabilize the time feel as the piano begins a highly rhythmic section complete with cross-rhythms and syncopated figures (see Example 21, pg. 90). In ms. 42 the piano serves the same function, creating an iso-rhythmic figure that stabilizes the pulse against the three-note syncopations in the saxophone.

Competing against such stabilizing figures is the appearance of rhythmic anticipations that help to generate tension and motion in the work. In jazz music an element of the unexpected can be achieved through the rhythmic anticipation of a harmony. However, the use of rhythmic anticipation in the third movement of the *Sonata* is somewhat diminished with the absence of a traditional harmonic framework. Rhythmic anticipations, created through the use of dotted figures,

like those found in mm. 57-62, do achieve the rhythmic excitement associated with syncopation (see Example 22, pg. 91)

Example 21: Iso-rhythm

The image displays a musical score for two systems, measures 19 and 20. The notation is arranged in three staves: a single treble clef staff at the top, and a grand staff (treble and bass clefs) below. In measure 19, the top staff features a melodic line with a slur and a dynamic marking of *f*. The grand staff below has a complex accompaniment with various rhythmic patterns and dynamics, including *f* and *p*. A vertical red line is drawn through the score, labeled "Iso-rhythm", indicating that the rhythmic patterns in the piano accompaniment of measure 19 are repeated in measure 20. In measure 20, the top staff has a dynamic marking of *mf* and a slur. The grand staff includes a triplet of notes in the right hand and a triplet of notes in the left hand, with a dynamic marking of *p*. The word "ritiss." is written above the final notes of the grand staff in measure 20. The label "Iso-rhythm" is positioned between the two systems, with red arrows pointing to the corresponding rhythmic patterns in both measures.

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### Example 22: Rhythmic anticipation

The image displays two systems of musical notation for Example 22, titled "Rhythmic Anticipation". Each system consists of a piano (right) staff and a bass (left) staff. The first system begins at measure 57. The piano staff features a melodic line with triplets and slurs, marked with a mezzo-piano (*mp*) dynamic. The bass staff provides harmonic support with chords and moving lines, including a section marked with a 5:6 ratio. The second system begins at measure 58. The piano staff continues the melodic development with triplets and slurs, marked with a piano (*p*) dynamic. The bass staff continues the harmonic accompaniment, also marked with a piano (*p*) dynamic. The title "Rhythmic Anticipation" is written above the piano staff of each system.

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The integration of jazz elements into the third movement of the *Sonata* is clearly more than a passive one. Upon close examination one can see that Denisov, through his highly analytical and detail mind, was able to reproduce the expressive and powerful elements of jazz while maintaining a unique compositional style that showcase the saxophone not its jazz heritage.

## Chapter 5

### Assimilation of Jazz Elements into Movements I & II

In reference to influence for the various movements of the *Sonata*, a few points of contention exist. Saxophonists James Umble and Jonathan Helton have all presented views that the *Sonata* is a work that contains three distinctive, movements, with influences from jazz and Pierre Boulez clearly presented.<sup>109</sup> Saxophonist Denise Dabney was the first to present the idea the inclusion of multicultural elements in the various movements, including Russian political symbolism, Shakuhachi flute practices from Japan and American jazz. Yuri Khoplov, the noted Denisov scholar, acknowledges influences from Webern, Stravinsky and Stockhausen, but with these influences being “spiritual rather than structural or material [istic].”<sup>110</sup>

Sonically, movements one and two differ significantly when compared to the third. However, some elements of jazz found in the third movement resonate with the performer and therefore contribute to an air of familiarity when compared to elements found in the opening two movements. The inclusion of jazz in movements one and two of the *Sonata* is not such a foreign concept, given the previous compositional use of jazz by Denisov. As it has been noted, Denisov

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<sup>109</sup> Saxophonist Jean-Marie Londeix cites Boulez’s *Symphonia* as a source model for the *Sonata* while Saxophonist Jonathan Helton cites the *Sonatine* for flute and piano as a model.

<sup>110</sup> Khoplov, *Edison Denisov*, 46.

used jazz in the outer movements of his work, *Fünf Geschichten vom Herrn Keuner* (1966), to combat the seriousness of the Brecht text. Additionally, Denisov's insight into the importance of compositional elements and their influence upon the compositional process raises questions as to the possibilities of assimilation:

The composer is seldom able to say, beforehand, in what form his project will be realized. In the course of work the form undergoes unexpected modifications and--this is very important--begins to dictate its own proper conditions. Often we cannot exactly differentiate between the movements when we are controlling the material and those when the material is controlling us. For instance this may (and often does) occur when the composer is working on one composition and the material suddenly develops an unexpected quality that transforms it into quite another kind of composition, and one which may have little in common with the original.<sup>111</sup>

Thus the question is raised, do the influences of jazz, so clearly presented in the third movement, stand alone or do these elements suggest their use in preceding movements? Khopolov alludes to this assimilation of jazz elements in the first movement stating, "The first movement carries some features similar to jazz improvisation."<sup>112</sup>

The clearest parallel that exists between the third and first movement, *allegro*, is the presence of "rhythmic energy and hot pulsation."<sup>113</sup> This rhythmic energy is carried by the extensive use of iso-rhythmic figures, accents and

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<sup>111</sup> Denisov, *The Compositional Process*, 3.

<sup>112</sup> Khopolov, 110.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, 110.

syncopation. Additionally, similarities exist in the presence of comping patterns in the piano, pizzicato bass patterns and melodic contours that are reminiscent of those found in the third movement.

In the first movement, a driving rhythmic pulse is created through the establishment of thirty-second note figures, beginning in ms. 7. An underlying ground pulse is created through the use of iso-rhythmic figures such as repeated, thirty-second note segments (motor rhythms) in the piano, and two-note, iso-rhythmic figures in the saxophone (see Example 23, pg. 95). The irregularity of the time signatures does little to effect the implication of a basic pulse. This is very similar to how the sixteenth-note lines between the saxophone and the piano create a rhythmic drive in the third movement.

Beginning in ms. 17, the call and response between the voices, in thirty-second note motor rhythms, help strengthen the regular ground pulse (see Example 23, pg. 95). This helps set up the seemingly arrhythmic improvisation sections found in mm. 21, 24 and 40. Much as in the third movement, the use of irregular rhythmic proportions gives the impression of improvisation. These spheres of proportion are used later in the movement, in ms. 79 to organize the linear chromatic lines. Here the proportions serve a dual purpose. First, they help organize the chromatic material into rhythmic cells they also produce the sliding rhythmic effect of improvisation (see Example 24, pg. 96).

Much as in the third movement, note groupings, articulations and accents create the syncopated feel. A prime example of this can be found in the saxophone line, mm. 93-96. In these measures the saxophone creates a melodic line that sounds as if it were notated in 12/8 time. By changing the accents in ms. 94, the established triple feel is interrupted and syncopated. This melodic segment is concluded with highly syncopated interjections between the saxophone and piano in mm. 95-96.

Example 23: Iso-rhythm, motor rhythm and call and response

The musical score for Example 23 is presented in two systems. The first system (measures 12-16) features a saxophone line in 6/8 time and a piano accompaniment. The piano part is characterized by a 'Motor Rhythm' of eighth notes in the left hand and chords in the right hand. The saxophone line is marked 'Iso-rhythm'. The second system (measures 15-16) continues the piano accompaniment with 'Comping' (piano chords) and 'Motor Rhythm in Call and Response' in the saxophone line. Dynamics include *pp*, *mp*, and *ppp*. Time signatures change from 6/8 to 5/16 and back to 6/8.

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Example 24: Spheres of proportion

The musical score for Example 24, titled "Spheres of proportion," consists of three staves. The first staff is in treble clef, the second in alto clef, and the third in bass clef. The music is written in 6/16 time and begins at measure 78. The score is divided into two systems. The first system (measures 78-116) features a complex rhythmic structure with various proportional markings such as 5:4, 6:4, and 3:2. The second system (measures 117-168) continues this structure, with a dynamic marking of *f* (forte) appearing in measure 117. The notation includes numerous accidentals, slurs, and ties, indicating a highly intricate and mathematically structured piece.

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The first movement does not utilize a ground bass line as a unifying element as in the third movement. However, there is the appearance of a pizzicato bass contour, of a similar nature, in mm. 22, 46, 65-68, and most clearly in mm. 100-116 (see Example 25, pg. 97).



### Example 25: Pizzicato bass line figures

The image displays two systems of musical notation for a piano. The first system, starting at measure 100, shows a treble clef staff with a melodic line and a bass clef staff with a prominent pizzicato bass line. The bass line consists of short, staccato notes. Dynamic markings include *f* and *f secco*. The second system, starting at measure 104, continues the piece with similar notation. The label "Pizzicato Bass" is placed below the bass staff in both systems. The time signature is 6/16.

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There are a number of sporadic, piano comping patterns used throughout the first movement. As in the third movement, they add rhythmic excitement and syncopation to the melodic activity of the saxophone. Unlike the third movement, the pitch materials for these patterns are not from tertian harmony, rather they come of subsets of rows (see Example 26).

### Example 26: Comping patterns

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Timbral effects such as glissandos and flutter tongue/growls are used in similar fashion to the third movement. Glissandos are used in ms. 36 following a dotted comping pattern in the piano. In ms. 40 the sliding effect adds to the improvisatory nature of the notated chaos of the line.

A flutter tongue/growl in ms. 61 announces a highly active and improvisatory section of the movement, mm. 61-84, in which irregular rhythmic proportions, linear chromatic lines, accents and timbral effects are combined for a highly improvisatory effect.

There is a great deal of speculation in regards to the impulse for the second movement, *lento*. Following the climactic ending of the *allegro*

movement, *lento* presents the saxophone in a stark contrast of colors and textures. This movement carries a few similarities to the outer movements, most notably its improvisatory nature and use of timbral effects. However unlike the surrounding movements, none of the similarities clearly dictate the influence of jazz.

Like the third movement, *lento* is notated with no bar lines. Although the effect is improvisatory, Denisov has taken great care to notate the spheres of proportion. New effects such as multiphonics, quartertones and tremolos add to the improvisational atmosphere of the movement.

We know that by the mid 1970's free jazz could be found simultaneously on club stages in Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Holland, Italy, Norway and Switzerland. This included the best of the avant-garde jazz scene such as Albert Ayler, Anthony Braxton, Marian Brown, Sun Ra, Boris Blacher and Leo Wright. Furthermore, techniques such as multiphonics and quartertones were commonly part of the language of the avant-garde jazz musician.

In his article, *New Music and Jazz*, Edison Denisov demonstrated an awareness of avant-garde jazz when he wrote the following passage on ostinatos, "But jazz provides us with new forms of ostinato, not all of which (especially those in the finest works of avant-garde jazz) have yet been investigated by composers."<sup>114</sup> He also goes on to discuss the "organic improvisatory nature" of

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<sup>114</sup> Denisov, *New Music and Jazz*, 32.

jazz.<sup>115</sup> Additionally, the appearance of Boris Blacher and Leo Wright appearing on the cover page along with photos of Soviet jazz musicians may strengthen this argument.

The importance of this movement on the micro level may pale in comparison to its inclusion on the macro level. Throughout this work Denisov has demonstrated his ability to present “the confrontation of an apparently arrhythmic improvisation with a basic rhythm that always restores the time-pulse.”<sup>116</sup> This has been effectively documented in the outer movement. So, why does Denisov include a movement with such contrast? Was Denisov presenting a cryptic, fast-slow-fast sonata structure?

Based upon this author’s experience as both a jazz and classical saxophonist, this work entire work, not just the individual movements, can be viewed the presentation of his axiom of departure and return to a rhythmic pulse. Such a micro and macro presentation of this concept, as well as the integration of jazz elements from the third movement would certainly not be foreign to Denisov, the pragmatic mathematician. A jazz artist’s interpretation of the aforementioned elements in the first and second movements does not make them “jazz like” in character, but rather it lends to the presentation of a powerful, dramatic and meaningful performance.

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<sup>115</sup> Ibid., 33.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid, 34.

## Conclusions

Edison Denisov's *Sonata for Alto Saxophone* represents a pioneering work for the saxophone, seamlessly blending elements of jazz with contemporary compositional technique and contemporary effects. This work represents more than the duality of the saxophone, it represents the duality of the man who composed it. He comments:

“The artist's personality, irrespective of the will, leaves its mark upon any composition. The work can be more or less objective in its aim, but the creator's individuality, his frame of mind and even the peculiarities of his character are embodied in his music.”<sup>117</sup>

Blending influence and emotion with structure and mathematical order, Edison Denisov created a work that is as much a metaphor for his life as a work for saxophone.

Within the *Sonata* the saxophonist is afforded the opportunity to display a wide array of tonal colors, emotions and technical virtuosity. Its complex rhythmic passages and freely conceived melodic lines allow the saxophonist to transcend the tyranny of the bar line to experience the freedoms of jazz rhythm, timbre, and melody.

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<sup>117</sup> S. Bradshaw, “Edison Denisov,” *Contemporary Composers*, rev. ed, pg. 218.

The primary goal of any serious musician should be to explore a work, beyond the surface notation to the heart of the composition, and to use his or her findings to move the listener. It is not enough to accept generalities such as a work being a 12-tone piece, a sonata or an art song, etc. One must recognize and accept all possible parameters for the creation of a work and strive to understand those elements for the purpose of performance. To revisit a previously cited Denisov comment:

“If we can observe an underlying principle, it has an objective reality, and we are therefore fully justified in investigating it and regarding it as part of the compositional process. The deeper we penetrate the musical fabric of a work, the more subtle and profound are the principles we uncover.”<sup>118</sup>

By understanding how jazz and its influence have been woven into the *Sonata for Alto Saxophone and Piano*, the saxophonist is able to transcend the notes on the page to present the true power and complexity of this work to the listener.

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<sup>118</sup> Denisov, *The Compositional Process*, 2.

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## **Vita**

Ora Paul Haar, was born in Omaha, Nebraska on July 13, 1971, the son of Dorothy M. Haar and Sol Haar. He began the studying the saxophone at age ten in Fremont, Nebraska. During his junior high and high school years he became a fixture in a number of local-touring jazz bands, and won numerous local and state competitions. After graduating from Fremont Senior High School (1989) he attended The University of Kansas where he studied with Vincent Gnojek. During his Undergraduate (1994) and Masters degrees (1996) he distinguished himself as a versatile saxophonist in both jazz and classical idioms, winning a number of national competitions and awards. Follow the completion of his Master of music degree in Saxophone Performance (1996) he married Tara Dill. In that same year he moved to Austin, Texas to study with Harvey Pittel and Jeffrey Hellmer at The University of Texas at Austin. In 1999 he was named Assistant Professor of Saxophone and Jazz Studies at The University of Tennessee. On April 18, 2001 he and his wife Tara were blessed with a daughter, Hailey Katherine Haar. He completed his Doctor of Musical Arts Degree in May of 2004. Mr. Haar has maintained an active jazz and classical studio as well as an active career as a performer and clinician.

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