Abstract

Title of dissertation: IMPROVISATION AND THE CONCERT SAXOPHONIST: A SURVEY OF COMPOSITIONAL AND PERFORMANCE TECHNIQUES

Michael Alexis Chamberlin, Doctor of Musical Arts, 2012

Dissertation directed by: Dr. Michael Votta
Director, Wind Band Activities
Chair, Wind and Percussion Division

Much of the contemporary concert (i.e. "classical") saxophone literature has connections to compositional styles found in other genres like jazz, rock, or pop. Although improvisation exists as a dominant compositional device in jazz, improvisation as a performance technique is not confined to a single genre. This study looks at twelve concert saxophone pieces that are grouped into three primary categories of compositional techniques: 1) those containing unmeasured phrases, 2) those containing limited relation to improvisation but a close relationship to jazz styles, and 3) those containing jazz improvisation. In concert saxophone music, specific crossover pieces use the compositional technique of jazz improvisation. Four

examples of such jazz works were composed by Dexter Morrill, Phil Woods, Bill Dobbins, and Ramon Ricker, all of which provide a foundation for this study.

In addition, pieces containing varying degrees of unmeasured phrases are highlighted. As this dissertation project is based in performance, the twelve pieces were divided into three recitals that summarize a pedagogical sequence. Any concert saxophonist interested in developing jazz improvisational skills can use the pieces in this study as a method to progress toward the performance of pieces that merge jazz improvisation with the concert format. The three compositional techniques examined here will provide the performer with the necessary material to develop this individualized approach to improvisation. Specific compositional and performance techniques vary depending on the stylistic content: this study examines improvisation in the context of concert saxophone repertoire.

IMPROVISATION AND THE CONCERT SAXOPHONIST: A SURVEY OF COMPOSITIONAL AND PERFORMANCE TECHNIQUES

by

Michael Alexis Chamberlin

Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of the
University of Maryland, College Park in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Musical Arts
2012

Advisory Committee:
- Dr. Michael Votta, Chair
- Professor Chris Vadala
- Professor Albert Regni
- Professor Chris Gekker
- Dr. Steven Marcus, Dean's Representative

©Copyright by
Michael Alexis Chamberlin
2012

Dedication

I would like to dedicate this document to my wife Victoria and my parents Joan and Alex for their continuous support and encouragement.

Table of Contents

Dedication ii

List of Recitals and Pieces iv

Introduction 1

Chapter One: Completely Unmeasured Pieces 6

Chapter Two: Pieces with Instances of Unmeasured Phrases 9

Chapter Three: Pieces with Limited Relation to Improvisation 16

Chapter Four: Introduction to the Four Jazz Pieces 24

Chapter Five: Concert Pieces Containing Jazz Improvisation 26

Conclusion 39

Works Cited 41

List of Recitals and Pieces

Recital One: October 9th, 2011

Georg Philipp Telemann – *Fantasia No. 3 in b minor for flute solo* (1732)

William Bolcom – *Lilth for E-flat alto saxophone and piano* (1984)

Joan Tower – *Wings for solo alto saxophone* (1981)

Ryo Noda – *Improvisation I for solo alto saxophone* (1972)

Jacques Ibert – *Concertino da Camera for alto saxophone and eleven instruments* (1935)

Recital Two: February 5th, 2012

John Anthony Lennon – *Distances Within Me for alto saxophone and piano* (1979)

Dexter Morrill – *Getz Variations for tenor saxophone and tape* (1984)

David Gillingham – *Mindset for solo alto saxophone* (1996)

Edison Denisov – *Sonata for alto saxophone and piano* (1970)

Recital Three: April 2nd, 2012

Phil Woods – *Sonata for alto saxophone and piano* (1997)

Bill Dobbins – *Sonata for tenor saxophone and piano* (1990)

Ramon Ricker – *Jazz Sonata for alto saxophone and piano* (1991)

Introduction

This study outlines the distinction between contemporary classical traditions and jazz improvisational techniques in a concert (i.e. "classical") setting by examining three compositional techniques used in twelve pieces for the concert saxophonist, all of which involve differing levels of improvisation.

The twelve pieces are grouped into three categories of compositional techniques: 1) those containing unmeasured phrases, 2) those containing limited relation to improvisation but a close relationship to jazz styles, and 3) those containing jazz improvisation.

For the purposes of performance, the twelve pieces were divided across three recitals that correlate into the three primary compositional techniques. The first two recitals were programmed to include a variety of musical influences, but without the use of jazz improvisation. The third recital featured pieces that are completely confluent in jazz improvisational styles and contemporary classical traditions. All three recitals follow a pedagogical sequence that develops through foundational repertoire and avant-garde works, leading toward and preparing the saxophonist to perform pieces requiring jazz improvisation in a concert setting.

Improvisation, as an act of creation, is deceptively simple to understand compared to the difficulty of extemporizing a unique musical idea. A purely musical definition may only address limited aspects of the term. This study examines improvisation in the context of composition and performance, building on the definition by Bruno Nettl:

> [Improvisation is] the creation of a musical work…as it is being performed. It may involve the work's immediate composition by its performers, or the elaboration or adjustment of an existing framework, or anything in between. To some extent every performance involves elements of improvisation…and to some extent every improvisation rests on a series of conventions or implicit rules.[1]

By this description nearly every piece of music offers the potential for improvisation, either in ways intended by the composer, or as a matter of performance practice. Jazz, a primary focus of this study, is historically connected to improvisation, but as Nettl's definition suggests, an understanding of the genre's implicit conventions and rules is needed to make performances convincing. Jazz improvisation combines elements of composition and performance simultaneously, and a method of trial and error resides at the foundation of jazz improvisation. When used as a compositional device, jazz improvisation is realized through the implementation of ideas and techniques unfamiliar to classically-trained performers.

In the early 20th century, jazz styles developed quickly throughout the United States. By the early 1930s, jazz had reached a world wide audience, possibly because of developments in recording technology. Contemporary jazz, as a global genre, encompasses countless influences, and has unlimited possibilities for stylistic expression. In a jazz context, author Paul Berliner defines "improvisation" based on how the word is used:

> When players use improvisation as a noun, referring to improvisations as artistic products, they typically focus on the products' precise relationship to the original models that inspired them…When artists use improvisation as a verb, however, they focus not only on the degree to which old models are

---

[1] Bruno Nettl et al., "Improvisation," In *Grove Music Online, Oxford Music Online*, http://www.oxford musiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/13738 (accessed March 8, 2012).

> transformed and new ideas created, but on the dynamic conditions and precise processes underlying their transformation and creation. Typically, they reserve the term for real-time composing—instantaneous decision making in applying and altering musical materials and conceiving new ideas… From this standpoint, unique features of interpretation, embellishment, and variation, when conceived in performance, can also be regarded theoretically as improvisation.[2]

Jazz is not the only genre that incorporates improvisation, but in the context of western classical music, jazz is the first genre to base an entire musical philosophy on the practice of improvisation. The first jazz players were entertainers, and they frequently altered the rhythms of familiar melodies to give them new life and interest. Embellishment of familiar melodies marked a significant development in jazz that eventually led to the personalized style crafted by trumpeter Louis Armstrong. The concept of a single soloist was borrowed from other genres, but the performance technique fit the intensifying style and needs of improvised jazz. Just as Baroque-era performers were expected to add embellishments in written music to create variety and spontaneity in performance, jazz musicians conceptualized embellishment with distinctive improvisational techniques. A great jazz improviser playing a melody within a constant harmonic context, or, a set of repeated chord changes, will inevitably embellish the primary theme. In addition, the earliest jazz performance techniques were transmitted aurally, not via notation; this process naturally emphasized individualistic expression over exact imitation.

Recordings are an important resource in any genre, but a recording only provides a limited view into musical development and does not always convey a complete story. Jazz improvisers are simultaneously performing and composing, even

[2] Paul F. Berliner, *Thinking in Jazz* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 221-222.

if they are playing a piece written by someone else. Unwritten "works", or improvisations, by some jazz musicians are only preserved through recordings. Unlike a traditional composer who has the opportunity to change specific details during the compositional process, a jazz improviser has no chance to adjust a live performance. As author and composer Gunther Schuller comments, a listener might decide that one jazz recording and the subsequent improvisation is the definitive version of a tune, but only because there is no other way to formulate an opinion.[3] This is in direct contrast to the classical tradition, where many composers are evaluated or defined by their output of scores rather than by the orchestras or the performers that play their works.[4] If some composers are considered to write music at a genius level based only on the content of their scores, some jazz musicians are considered to improvise at a genius level regardless of which compositions they choose to perform. This is the junction where details surrounding jazz and concert styles become disconnected.

This study relies on the implementation of compositional techniques and the conceptualization of performance techniques in multiple genres. Through the notion of composition in performance, jazz improvisation bridges both of these concepts. In a jazz setting, ideas beyond the melody are often improvised; consequently, the audience will likely hear a large amount of new material, but the constant harmonic context allows the listener to stay connected to the performer's melody during an improvised section. If a jazz group plays the same piece two days in a row, the tempo, style, and interpretation could vary depending on mood. Conversely, a concert piece

[3] Gunther Schuller, *Early Jazz: Its Roots and Musical Development* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1968): x.
[4] Ibid., x.

may have the opportunity for interpretation, but the notes, tempo and style will essentially remain the same.

Performance techniques are a direct result of the written composition. Variations in performance are common in every genre, but contemporary composers continue to search for distinctive ways to convey their compositional ideas, a pursuit not easily realized due to the use of a notational system that is not equipped to convey every possible musical inflection. In order to simulate rhythmic freedom in a concert saxophone piece, many contemporary composers apply unmeasured phrases; however, all six pieces in this study containing the compositional device also include specific tempo markings, an indication that each composer is concerned with pacing.

Concerning the solo piece *Improvisation I*, saxophonist Steven Mauk interprets how Ryo Noda may envision the connection between unmeasured phrases and distinct tempo markings:

> The interpretation of the suggested tempo, rhythmic values, and noted rests and *fermati* play a major role in determining the pace of this piece…He [Noda] indicates that an eighth note should be performed at the metronome marking of 80. This does not mean that the Improvisation should be pulsated or played metronomically… Set the metronome at 80 and count the beats… so you get a sense of how much physical time is used… Then, without counting, play or sing the passage to fill that approximate amount of time, being sure to keep rhythms generally in proportion. [5]

In a performance situation, creating a new version of any piece is possible through improvisation, regardless of the composer's improvisational intent. Understanding the boundaries constructed by each composer is essential to performing these twelve works in the correct style.

[5] Steven Mauk, "A Master Lesson on Noda's *Improvisation I*," Ithaca College Faculty Page, http://www.faculty.ithaca.edu/mauk/docs/NodaImprov.pdf (accessed February 16, 2012).

Chapter One: Completely Unmeasured Pieces

Ryo Noda – *Improvisation I*

Ryo Noda was born in Amagasaki, Japan in 1948. He studied saxophone and composition from 1968-72 at the Osaka College of Music in Toyonaka, Osaka, Japan. Additionally, Noda studied with Fred Hemke at Northwestern University and with Jean-Marie Londeix at the Bordeaux Conservatory. *Improvisation I* is the first of three solo saxophone pieces written by Noda with the title "improvisation". This piece was dedicated to and premiered by Londeix at the 1972 third world saxophone congress held in Toronto, Canada.

Despite the title, *Improvisation I* is entirely notated; however, Noda writes within a framework that is entirely unmeasured. To guide the solo performer he indicates one tempo marking at the outset that provides context to rhythmic pacing. In performance the goal is to follow the written notation while portraying a sense of rhythmic freedom. Capturing the authentic Japanese style of the "shakuhaci", an end-blown wind instrument cited as a primary influence for the piece, is essential when considering performance techniques:

> Since Shakuhachi music's primary focus is on timbre… attacks and releases require special attention… This also means that all other techniques should be interpreted from the viewpoint of shakahaci music rather than a western-influenced performance technique. This includes variation within grace notes, vibrato, trills, and tremolos.[6]

[6] Andy Wen, "*Improvisation I* and *Pulse 72* by Ryo Noda: An Analytical and Interpretive Study," (DMA diss., University of Georgia, 1995), 50-51.

Despite the lack of performer improvisation, Noda writes one brief “ad lib.” section that is based on rhythmic embellishment. Noda writes only note heads during this segment, leaving the exact approach up to the performer. The form of *Improvisation I* is A-B-A’, as the melody transitions from slow moving passages to an active middle section before slowing down and restating opening melodic ideas. Noda achieves the spirit of improvisation through his specific notational and compositional style, and as the title may suggest, performers are welcome to contribute their own interpretive methods to the composition. *Improvisation I* is meant to embody spontaneity without placing a large amount of responsibility on the performer, and any saxophonist could easily learn to execute the extended techniques needed to perform this piece.

Joan Tower – *Wings*

Joan Tower was born in the United States in 1938, and at the age of nine moved with her family to Bolivia. She later returned to the United States to formally study composition and piano. In 1968 Tower completed a doctorate in composition at Columbia University. Her piece titled *Wings* was originally written for solo clarinet in 1981, but soon after publication an edition for solo alto saxophone was transcribed and released though the assistance of John Sampen, Steven Stusek, and Arno Bornkamp. In the score, Tower describes the programmatic imagery associated with the piece:

> *Wings* was written for my friend and colleague Laura Flax, who premiered the piece at her recital in Merkin Hall (New York City) on December 14, 1981. The image behind the piece is one of a large bird - perhaps a falcon - at times flying very high gliding along the thermal currents, barely moving. At other

> moments, the bird goes into elaborate flight patterns that loop around, diving downwards, gaining tremendous speeds.[7]

A striking difference between this piece and other unaccompanied saxophone works like Noda's *Improvisation I* and David Gillingham's *Mindset* is the appearance and use of phrase structure. Although *Wings* is unmeasured there are multiple melodic sections, each with varying degrees of tempo suggestions. The lack of measure lines implies freedom in phrasing and pacing, a concept similar to other unmeasured works. Tower also transitions phrases smoothly and allows only a few momentary breaks for the performer. Musical interpretation of freedom in *Wings* is achieved through programmatic elements where *Improvisation I* is more introspective and personal in character. The next set of pieces use unmeasured phrases sparingly, but compositional interpretation of the stylistic context is still necessary from the performer.

[7] Joan Tower, *Wings* (New York, NY: Associated Music Publishers, 1991).

Chapter Two: Pieces That Contain Instances of Unmeasured Phrases

William Bolcom – *Lilith*

William Bolcom, also born in 1938, studied at the Paris Conservatory and completed a doctorate in composition at Stanford University. His teachers include Leland Smith, John Verrall, Oliver Messiaen, Jean Rivier, and Darius Milhaud. Bolcom's personal musical influences include music from many genres, including American folk, jazz, theater and neo-classicism. Bolcom taught at the University of Michigan from 1978 until his retirement in 2008.

Bolcom wrote *Lilith* as part of a 1983 National Endowment for the Arts Consortium Commissioning Grant. Saxophonists Laura Hunter, Donald Sinta, and Joseph Wytko commissioned three concert saxophone pieces from three different composers. In addition to *Lilith*, William Albright and David Diamond each contributed a sonata to the project, and all three works were completed by 1984. *Lilith* incorporates numerous extended techniques on the saxophone, including multiphonics, frequent use of the altissimo register, and stylized tonal effects. The piece is programmatic, and each movement provides the listener with a unique portrait of Lilith's individual character traits. As a composer Bolcom is interested in exploring these traits through musical effects on the saxophone and piano. Considering performance practice, the saxophonist plays the demonic role of Lilith throughout each movement.

The first movement portrays an overall image of Lilith by highlighting the nuances of her multiple personalities. She is capable of behaving in a chaotic and

abrasive manner, and can suddenly alter her mood to depict sensuality through expressive lyricism. The saxophone begins the piece unaccompanied with a two-part unmeasured phrase. Bolcom describes the opening segment as “wild and raunchy, free” and the second half as “suddenly sweet and slow”. The overwhelming use of detailed compositional techniques in this short introduction is staggering, and through musical interpretation in performance, the image of Lilith as an unpredictable female demon becomes clear. Many of the techniques require extensive manipulation of the saxophone and the individual approach to sound production. Dynamics, range, style, and technical ability are all pressed to the extreme. After the piano enters there are two more brief passages of unmeasured content. There is no discernible compositional trend as the unmeasured ideas occur at tempos that are both fast and slow.

The second movement conveys a musical image of Lilith playing the seductive role of a dream haunting succubus. The saxophone softly purrs a lyrical melody while the rhythmic piano accompaniment represents a man troubled by his dreams. Lilith often appears to unattended sleeping men, desiring to exploit their sexuality. Bolcom indicates one slow tempo for the entire movement, but the extended techniques and descriptive text in the score continue throughout this movement and the remainder of the piece.

Lilith is said to travel freely between the world of the living and the dead, and this movement is a wistful and fleeting musical dialogue between both players that represents a spontaneous chase. Through chaotic leaps and unexpected twists in contour, the saxophone melody drives the piece forward while the piano interjects

and trades melodic ideas. In the third movement, titled “Will-o’-the-Wisp”, Bolcom writes that the tempo should be “presto possible (smooth, no ‘pulse’)”. In addition, Bolcom writes that “32nd groups are used for convenience of reading and are not intended to convey a pulsed feeling in performance.”[8] These comments indicate that compositional intent is sometimes difficult to express in standard musical notation. Of all the instances of unmeasured phrases and pieces, this movement seems to have the most relaxed rules, yet the fast tempo provides an inherent sense of forward motion.

Stealing children is another common element to the Lilith myth, and is used by Bolcom as the basis for the fourth movement. As the frenzied third movement ends, this scene is a contrasting view of Lilith’s lair, where the audience hears a variety of programmatic effects. In performance the saxophonist plays facing the piano, allowing for enhanced reverberation. The piano provides a dissonant harmonic backdrop for the disjointed and occasionally chaotic saxophone melody. Among many other extended techniques, the saxophone part contains glissandos through the altissimo register, “smack” sounds, smorzato sub-tone effects, and growls. Pacing and timing is left completely up to the saxophonist and although there are clearly divided sections, the movement is unmeasured. A purposeful desynchronization between the two parts occurs near the end, a compositional technique only possible in an unmeasured phrase.

The fifth movement is not based on a specific portion of the myth but is instead a broad interpretation of Lilith’s character traits. “When Joan Morris [Bolcom’s wife] first heard this movement she stated, *we can see the beasts dancing around the fire, but we only see their backs*. This is a terrific image for this rollicking

---

[8] William Bolcom, *Lilith* (Milwaukee, WI: Hal Leonard, 1989).

and satanical dance movement."[9] Bolcom writes the fifth movement dance rhythms in a unique time signature that sounds and plays like traditional compound meter, but instead, a dotted eighth note receives the beat. As a musical effect the rhythm sounds like a rapid triplet occurs on each downbeat, but in the score the notation advances slowly. In order to perform *Lilith* accurately both players must have exceptional technique on their instruments because musical interpretation of the myth relies on strong stylistic considerations.

John Anthony Lennon – *Distances Within Me*

John A. Lennon was born in 1950 and grew up in Mill Valley, California. He holds a degree from the University of San Francisco and a doctorate in composition from the University of Michigan. While in Michigan, Lennon studied with Leslie Bassett, William Bolcom and William Albright, three composers familiar with the saxophone as a concert instrument. Aside from *Distances Within Me*, Lennon composed five other pieces that feature the saxophone: *Symphonic Rhapsody*, a concerto for alto saxophone and orchestra, *Aeterna*, for solo alto saxophone, *Messengers*, for guitar and alto saxophone, *Elysian Bridges*, for saxophone quartet, and *Still the Fire*, for alto saxophone, cello, and piano.

Lennon uses unmeasured phrases to create an ethereal mood in *Distances Within Me*, an approach that easily allows the performers to bring emotional melodic qualities into the foreground. Apart from a few brief episodes of unmeasured phrases in the first half, a large middle section starting at letter H, and a majority of the

---

[9] Laura Hunter,"Exploring the Concert Saxophone Repertoire: William Bolcom's *Lilith*," *Saxophone Journal* 12, no. 3 (fall 1987): 22.

ending contain significant instances of unmeasured ideas. Lennon's compositional approach to unmeasured phrases is different from the style used by Bolcom, and the resulting music embodies a feeling of unrestrained freedom. During the unmeasured passages both players should work together in order to achieve precision in their stylistic alignment.

Complete knowledge of how both the saxophone and piano parts fit together is essential in the rehearsal stages, prior to performance. A consistent sense of timing is also critical between both players when *Distances* connects passages written in time to unmeasured segments. The melody at rehearsal letter L is one example of how Lennon transitions seamlessly between time signatures. He also reuses portions of the melodies, but disguises them by altering the surrounding material. Strong rhythmic and melodic motives tie these interconnected sections together.

Both the dramatic opening and chaotic middle passages in *Distances* are based on strong rhythmic motives while the unmeasured ending focuses on sustained note values. Starting at rehearsal letter Q, Lennon writes a long decrescendo that slowly fades to the absence of sound. This passage begins in tempo but gradually transitions into a slower, unmeasured time feeling. In the score, Lennon describes the ending as "from the distance" and uses words like "freely", "suspended" and "vanish" to guide the performers. Synchronization between parts is difficult in *Distances Within Me*, and prior experience with unmeasured phrases in unaccompanied pieces like *Improvisation I* and *Wings* will strengthen the concept of melodic interpretation within a duo piece that contains varying degrees of fluctuation in tempo.

Edison Denisov – *Sonate*

In 1970 Edison Denisov composed *Sonate*, an innovative piece written for alto saxophone and piano that marks a turning point in concert saxophone repertoire due to the combination of contemporary avant-garde language with rhythmic elements and idiomatic effects unique to the saxophone.[10] The political climate of the Soviet Union was not conducive to accepting outside cultural influences, but Denisov actively promoted Russian music while concurrently exploring musical trends across Europe and in America, including the jazz compositions of Duke Ellington.[11]

He first heard the concert saxophone when Jean-Marie Londeix performed a concert tour of the Soviet Union in the late 1960s.[12] Londeix requested to meet with Denisov while he was in Moscow, and soon after their initial meeting Denisov agreed to write a chamber work for saxophone.

Denisov began corresponding with Londeix in 1970, and their discussions outlined detailed aspects of tonal possibilities on the saxophone, including extended techniques and range. Denisov was unfamiliar with the full capability of the saxophone, so Londeix sent him recordings in the hopes of inspiring his compositional interest. Londeix also promised to perform the new work on concert tours in Europe and the United States. Denisov responded favorably to the support, and with the help of editorial suggestions by Londeix, incorporated extended techniques into a new piece titled *Sonate*. By September of 1970 Denisov sent a draft

---

[10] James Umble, *Jean-Marie Londeix: Master of the Modern Saxophone* (Glenmore, PA: Roncorp, 2000): 102.
[11] Michael Norsworthy and Gerard McBurney, "Edison Denisov," *In Grove Music Online*. *Oxford Music Online*, (accessed February 26, 2012).
[12] Chris Ford, "Eleven Jazz-Influenced Works for Concert Saxophone," (DMA diss., University of Maryland, 1991): 91.

to Londeix for review and the premiere, by Londeix, occurred in Chicago at the second world saxophone congress in December of 1970.

The entire second movement is unmeasured and is played at a slow tempo. Of the three movements, the second contains a majority of the extended techniques, including multiphonics, tremolos, and quarter tones. The slow, unaccompanied movement allows the saxophonist to progress unhurried and freely. Denisov notates rests and phrases in groupings that are not always symmetrical, resulting in slightly syncopated rhythms. The piano only interjects a few softly played harmonic ideas in the upper register near the end of the piece.

In the surrounding two movements, the musical notation includes contrasting rhythmic groupings between the saxophone and piano that make rhythmic alignment difficult. Mixed meter is prominent in the first movement of the *Sonate* and oddly phrased yet precise rhythmic melodies appear throughout in the third movement. Distant jazz influences are heard primarily in the third movement, particularly in the phrasing and style of Denisov's syncopated rhythms. In performance the piece occasionally sounds chaotic and represents a unique view into the avant-garde genre.

Chapter Three: Pieces with Limited Relation to Improvisation

Jacques Ibert – *Concertino da Camera*

The following three pieces are connected to this study by their connection to improvised music and their significant relationship to concert saxophone performance practices.

Jacques Ibert studied composition at the Paris Conservatory from 1910–14 before serving four years in the French military. While studying composition at the Conservatory, Ibert expanded his knowledge of traditional compositional styles and current trends in popular culture. “Perhaps the most influential experience on his future works was Ibert’s playing for the silent movies. He had to improvise for hours on end, constantly changing the dramatic style to match the scenes of the pictures.”[13] A classically trained pianist might have the technical ability to improvise, but never have the opportunity or interest to apply that skill. Through his various performance opportunities as a young musician, Ibert demonstrates an interest in a variety of musical genres and performance styles, including improvisation. After returning from the military he completed his studies in Paris and quickly found success by winning the Grand Prix de Rome in 1919. In addition to composing concert works, Ibert scored several film soundtracks during the 1930s, a continuation of his musical development and personal interest in popular and dramatic music.[14]

---

[13] William Stuart Graves, “An Historical Investigation of and Performance Guide for Jacques Ibert’s *Concertino da Camera*,” (DMA diss., University of Texas at Austin, 1998): 6.
[14] Alexandra Laederich, “Jacques Ibert,” In Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/13675 (accessed February 28, 2012).

Ibert's *Concertino da Camera* was commissioned by and dedicated to Sigurd Rascher, a German saxophonist interested in expanding the saxophone repertoire while bolstering his personal performance career. Rascher met with Ibert in 1933 to demonstrate the expanding technical possibilities of the saxophone, much in the same way Londeix would later market the instrument directly to Denisov.

Ibert agreed to write a solo piece for Rascher, who premiered the first movement of the *Concertino* at a Paris concert on May 2nd, 1935. The first complete performance of both movements occurred in Switzerland on December 11th that same year. Soon after the initial premiere, Ibert gave a copy of the score to saxophonist Marcel Mule, who "premiered" a complete version in Paris on January 14th, 1936 unknowing of the Switzerland performance.[15]

The original instrumentation of eleven instruments yields a large chamber work, but the version in this study features a piano reduction. William Graves, author of a dissertation concerning Ibert's life and works, argues that current musical trends held a significant place in Ibert's compositional style, specifically in his approach to form and harmony.

> "Ibert tended to use standard forms, such as sonata, rondo, concerto, and fugue, as a compositional basis, yet modified them, infusing modern sounds into these forms. Within the classical framework, his compositions display a variety of musical ideas inherited from the romanticists and impressionists. He also incorporated popular styles of the day such as jazz and dance hall music…. Harmonically, Ibert writes within a traditional tonal framework, yet he continually obscures the tonality by incorporating chromaticism, fluctuations between major and minor modes, rapidly shifting tonal centers, and non-tonal elements such as octatonic scales and quartal harmony."[16]

---

[15] Graves, "An Historical Investigation," 37-45.
[16] Ibid., 23.

Distinct examples of those influences, including octatonic (diminished) scales and rhythmic syncopation, are found throughout the *Concertino*. Although these aspects suggest jazz influences, the *Concertino* should not be interpreted with jazz articulation because Ibert purposefully wrote the piece in a neo-classic style. In his dissertation concerning jazz influences in concert saxophone pieces, author Chris Ford argues that Ibert clearly wrote with jazz concepts in mind. As evidence he makes significant observations regarding the opening melodic statement from rehearsal number "1" to number "5": "If the melody is displaced by an eighth-note…the rhythm becomes simple and folk-like."[17] Based on the mid-1930s time frame of the commission, and Ibert's interest in popular trends, he may have heard music played by the French jazz musicians Django Reinheart and Stéphane Grappelli around the same the time as he was writing the *Concertino*. Graves claims that the relationship to jazz is distant or perhaps coincidental given Ibert's educational and compositional background and instead suggests that a prominent contemporary of Ibert, possibly Igor Stravinsky, is a more likely source of inspiration.[18] Regardless of his exact influence, Ibert's use of syncopation is a primary reason that saxophonists are continually drawn to the musicality and challenging nature of the *Concertino*.

Ibert frequently uses octatonic scales in both parts, including an appearance in the introductory accompaniment and a three measure saxophone melody beginning five measures after rehearsal number "1". Diminished scales also occur during the unaccompanied saxophone melody that opens the second movement, and during the solo saxophone cadenza.

---

[17] Ford, "Eleven Jazz-Influenced Works," 59.
[18] Graves, "An Historical Investigation," 74.

Ibert's *Concertino* requires a strong perception of syncopated rhythm in performance. In addition, the piece requires excellent technique from both performers due to chromaticism and frequently changing key centers. The saxophone melody contains several instances of altissimo, including a climactic finish to the opening and closing melodies in the first movement and again during the second movement cadenza. The *Concertino da Camera* is foundational repertoire in the concert saxophone genre and provides developing saxophonists with an opportunity to play in a virtuosic and neo-classic context.

Georg Philipp Telemann – *Fantasia No. 3*

In 1732 or early 1733, Telemann published "12 Fantasias a Travers sans Basse" in Hamburg, Germany as one volume. The melodies were written for solo flute and *Fantasia No. 3* comes from this publication. One original copy survived, and is now located at the Library of the Conservatoire Royal in Brussels, Belgium. In the 1992 edition published by Amadeus, the editor includes historical photographs of the original handwritten manuscript.[19]

The inclusion of this transcription is meant to highlight the unique connection between contemporary performance practice methods in improvisation and the ornamental techniques of the Baroque era. Embellishment is a critical building block for any developing jazz musician, and Baroque performance practices allowed performers the opportunity to contribute their own ideas to notated melodies. In *Fantasia No. 3* the melody is broken into two repeated sections, and ornamentation

[19] Georg Philipp Telemann, *Twelve Fantasias for Flute Solo*, Ed. by Peter Reidemeister (Switzerland: Amadeus, 1992).

traditionally occurs only during the repeats. For the saxophonist, articulations in this style should create the sound of a smooth legato. Of the three pieces in this category, *Fantasia No. 3* requires the most input from the performer and is open to a wide variety of interpretation.

Expressive techniques are easily transferred to the saxophone from other wind instruments, and for this study, historically accurate recordings were used to reference baroque technique, style, and ornamentation. Pacing is the primary concern when considering embellishment, and in *Fantasia No. 3*, expert performers altered rhythms in a way that fit the tempo, yet strayed from staying in a strict time feel. At crucial harmonic moments, an emphasis on individual rhythm supersedes the convention to stay in time. Baroque embellishments are not easily improvised, and many musical ideas in this version of *Fantasia No. 3* were prepared prior to performance. This is similar to an improvising musician discovering connections between chord changes through individual practice. In a rehearsed performance, musicians rarely improvise over an unfamiliar harmonic backdrop.

David Gillingham – *Mindset*

David Gillingham's large-scale wind band compositions are recognized internationally and his chamber works are popular with performers in search of original pieces written in a contemporary style. As of 2012, Gillingham has written five pieces containing the saxophone as a featured instrument: *Visions*, for saxophone quartet, *Mindset*, for solo alto saxophone, *American Counterpoint*, for woodwind trio, *Supercell,* for solo alto saxophone and percussion ensemble, and *Double Image*, for

solo saxophones and wind ensemble. Born in 1947, Gillingham studied music education at the University of Wisconisn-Oshkosh and completed a doctorate in music theory and composition at Michigan State University.[20]

This study will focus on the unaccompanied piece titled *Mindset*, which follows a traditional fast–slow–fast arc over three movements. *Mindset* contains contemporary jazz harmony, chromatic melodies, and motivic compositional ideas composed in a jazz style. The first movement, titled "in the heat of the argument", includes two tempo changes blending the primary sections. Gillingham writes all three movements without using a key signature, allowing freedom and spontaneity in his compositional choices. Additionally, with the absence of a key signature, the chromatic melodies become easier for the performer to read.

Gillingham incorporates various extended techniques, one of which is entirely unique to *Mindset*. The performer is asked to bend the pitch of a held note downward or upward while simultaneously producing a wide vibrato effect rising and falling in intensity. The upward pitch bend is nearly impossible to achieve with clarity without using a quarter-tone fingering to force the pitch in the proper direction. Other effects throughout the three movements include densely written note sequences that gradually speed up or slow down, trills and glissandos, tremolos and multiphonics, flutter tonguing and growling, fingering and tonguing without tone, key noises, and passages in the altissimo register. All of these sounds blend effortlessly into the surrounding compositional material and Gillingham is careful not to overuse any single extended technique.

[20] David Gillingham, "Biography and Compositions," Personal Website, http://www.gillinghammusic.com (accessed February 19, 2012).

The melodic contour in *Mindset* targets important chord tones, a compositional technique similar to the jazz performance practice of interpreting chord changes and improvising. The tritone is the most important interval in the first movement, contributing to the ambiguity of the key centers while providing tension and harmonic interest.

The second movement, titled “the heart grows fonder”, is through-composed with two distinct sections and a brief contrasting conclusion. Like the first movement, the ending phrase recalls the opening motive in a new key, before quickly transitioning into the conclusion.

In the third movement, titled “in a euphoric state”, jazz harmonic intent is clearly heard through the use of an intervallic melody. These ideas are easy to identify, and so harmonically clear that a chord symbol could be rendered above certain passages. As an example, the third movement begins by outlining the chord tones of CMaj.13(#11), and is followed by a transitional Bb major chord that leads to the outline of an EMaj.13(#11) chord. This approach is practical for the performer who is already accustomed to practicing and identifying chord structures on the saxophone. After the identification process, a saxophonist can practice individual segments of the harmony by creating melodic patterns that follow the chord structures in *Mindset*.

If individual note reading is compressed into chord shapes, the learning process will shorten and the necessary finger technique will feel familiar to the performer. *Mindset* is suitable for an advanced saxophonist interested in performing contemporary jazz styles or learning how jazz harmonic theory applies to a confluent

concert piece. By using the chord structures found throughout the piece, a saxophonist can work on unique harmonic ideas pertinent to *Mindset*. As a final consideration, this type of preparation gives the written melody a natural feeling that is close in character to jazz improvisation.

Chapter Four: Introduction to the Four Jazz Pieces

The following four saxophone works merge jazz improvisation with concert saxophone compositional techniques. Aside from *Getz Variations*, the final three sonatas by Phil Woods, Ramon Ricker, and Bill Dobbins share the same title. The 21st century concert saxophonist has no shortage of pieces to use for personal development, and knowledge of jazz performance style is not always inherent to the genre. Despite this notion, an opportunity to explore jazz improvisation in a concert setting remains available through the performance or study of these four pieces. These specific compositions are not often heard because both players must maintain the ability to improvise over difficult chord changes and interpret challenging notation similar to other avant-garde saxophone works. *Getz Variations* is performed to a pre-recorded accompaniment, and combines written melodies, unmeasured phrases, and chord changes. The piece also contains more avant-garde influences when compared to the three jazz sonatas in this study. When considering the specific distinctions between unmeasured phrases and jazz improvisation, *Getz Variations* falls in the middle of each category because the accompaniment material on the recording is not truly unmeasured or improvised.

In order to compose in a jazz style the composer needs extensive knowledge of separate skills, jazz harmony and melodic contour. If unfamiliar with jazz improvisation, a composer may have a difficult time writing interesting harmony used in a constant harmonic context. Continuity in any piece of music relies on strong harmonic foundations, but repeated chord changes need to captivate both the

improvisers and the audience. Phil Woods modified his sonata on several occasions over a long period of time, with the focus of the composition on combining concert and jazz influences.

There are many similarities in the saxophone works by Ramon Ricker and Bill Dobbins, including the approach to modern harmony and traditional jazz performance practices. For example, they allow equal time for each soloist to improvise, and both sonatas rely on the ability of the performers to seamlessly blend their improvised ideas into the written music. For these reasons, and because the improvised content is challenging in every piece, all four of the concert jazz pieces are not ideal for the young saxophonist. Playing concert repertoire written in similar styles, like the *Concertino da Camera* and *Mindset*, and approaching improvisation through traditional jazz "standards" will better prepare a saxophonist to play these pieces.

Chapter Five: Concert Pieces Containing Jazz Improvisation

Dexter Morrill – *Getz Variations*

Getz Variations, written by Dexter Morrill in 1984, is a unique experiment combining several compositional elements with various jazz styles. Although *Getz Variations* includes unmeasured phrases, the accompaniment is fixed and the timing cannot be altered in performance. As a result the focus of the piece is primarily on free improvisation in a jazz context.

Dexter Morrill was born in Massachusetts in 1938 and he began his collegiate studies in 1956 at Colgate University where he studied arranging and trumpet. In 1960 Morrill began composition studies at Stanford University under Leland Smith and Leonard Ratner. After completing doctoral work at Cornell University in 1969, Morrill returned to Colgate University to teach composition until his retirement in 2001. During the 1970s Morrill fostered his interest in computer generated music, writing many new pieces that combine live and pre-recorded music. In 1984, the National Endowment for the Arts sponsored a grant for Morrill to write a new composition for jazz tenor saxophonist Stan Getz. The director of the Center for Computer Research in Music and Acoustics, named John Chowning, gave Morrill the idea for the project.[21]

Composed for tenor saxophone and tape, *Getz Variations* was premiered by Stan Getz during a live performance at Stanford University on July 19th, 1984.

---

[21] Dexter Morrill, "Biography," Personal Website http://www.dextermorrill.com/bio (accessed February 21, 2012).

> "This composition is not a variation form in any historical sense. Instead, it refers to the variation idea that is inherent in any well constructed improvisation, and it emphasizes the role that Stan played in the shape of the whole piece... the piece is really intended as an improvisation for tenor saxophone. The score gives a general picture of the musical 'events' that are heard on tape, but are not meant to be precise musical notations. The performer should feel free to experiment with this music."[22]

The pre-recorded 'tape' features a blend of live instruments, including small segments of Stan Getz's tenor saxophone, and computer generated tones. Morrill also used portions of an obscure seven measure improvisation by Getz from a late 1940s recording of Woody Herman's band playing "Part IV" from the composition *Summer Sequence*.[23] Coincidently, Morrill includes the opening notes of the *Summer Sequence* solo, as played by Getz, at a climactic moment in the fourth movement accompaniment of *Getz Variations*.

The duration of *Getz Variations* is just over twenty minutes, a lengthy amount of time to perform an elongated improvisation while holding the attention of an audience. Unlike a live performance of avant-garde jazz, the recorded accompaniment does not respond or interact with the performer. Creating the illusion of spontaneity is best accomplished during the pre-recorded melodic phrases in the first and fourth movements of *Getz Variations*. Instead of reacting to the recording, the performer can anticipate the accompaniment melody and mimic the surprise typically associated with live jazz. Certain harmonic schemes in Morrill's avant-garde accompaniment sound precisely notated, and in those places the performer could write out a basic harmonic outline above the unmeasured material in the score. The chord changes or

---

[22] Dexter Morrill, *Getz Variations*, (Hamilton, NY: Chenango Valley Music Press, 1984).
[23] Dexter Morrill, "Getz Variations," Liner Notes for *Music for Stanford*, CRC 2732, Centaur Records, CD, 2004.

harmonic reminders could serve as a melodic guide for the saxophonist. The first movement, titled "Echoes", is the best example of this performance concept as there are no chord changes, but a clear harmonic background is easily heard. Morrill only provides the performer with accompaniment material in the score and gives no indication of how to construct melodic content. If a saxophonist freely improvises without considering the surrounding tonality, the possibility for notes to sound out of place increases greatly.

In the second system Morrill writes one significant measure line which indicates a new section in the tonality of F Major on the tenor saxophone. The third system shifts to Eb Major, then to an Eb whole tone sound, which is written harmonically as Eb7(#11,#5) before blending back into the previously heard F Major tonality in the fourth system. The tonal shifts are not equal or measured, but once realized in rehearsal they become a useful guide in performance.

The second movement, titled "Quartet", and the third movement, titled "The Lady from Portola", contain clear instances of jazz chord changes. In "Quartet", each distinct solo section gradually increases in length as the movement continues while "The Lady from Portola" contains a written melody and an improvised section over a constant harmonic context. In the final movement, "Windows", the recording is difficult to follow because of Morrill's approach to the accompaniment. The recorded sound of Stan Getz's tenor saxophone fades in and out at random intervals, and although Morrill indicates that the looped patterns are timed, the recording is nearly impossible to follow exactly, as the primarily purpose is to provide a varying background for interplay during the live performance.

Phil Woods – *Sonata*

In 1961, jazz saxophonist Phil Woods began writing on a new jazz influenced concert piece featuring the alto saxophone, a composition resulting from a commission by saxophonist Victor Morosco. The premiere occurred at Carnegie Hall on December 2nd, 1962 under the title *Four Moods* and the instrumentation was alto saxophone, piano, and bass. Morosco programmed the new jazz influenced piece at the end of a performance featuring traditional concert saxophone music. This early edition had virtually no room for improvisation, leading Morosco to ask Woods if he would consider expanding the piece to include more opportunities to improvise. In 1974, *Four Moods* became a sonata written for alto saxophone and piano, and the first movement was expanded to include improvised sections for both players.[24] A third and final revision in 1994 prompted by the composer includes improvisation in the third movement and changes the fourth movement meter from 7/8 to 7/4.

Morosco identifies the most critical performance element of this crossover style in the liner notes to his 1981 recording of the *Sonata*:

"As an example of the blending of traditional and jazz music, the *Sonata* is more than just the juxtaposition of two kinds of music. The composer requires the performers to embellish the written music as well as improvise at given sections, much in the spirit of jazz and in the true tradition of Baroque music. It is performed here in such a manner that the listener is often unsure where the written music stops and the improvisations take over."[25]

---

[24] David Andrew Brennan, "A Performer's Analysis of Phil Woods' *Sonata for Alto Saxophone and Piano*," (DMA diss., University of California, 2004. In ProQuest Dissertations and Theses, http://search.proquest.com/docview/275733582?accountid=14696): 1-2 (accessed June 25, 2011).

[25] Victor Morosco, "Phil Woods *Sonata*", Liner Notes for *Double Exposure*, MS102CD, Morsax Music, CD, 2001.

Performers should improvise with stylistic inflections that match the surrounding character of the piece, and the harmonic framework allows musical discovery through collective artistic expression. The improvisations should sound fluid, and as if they are based on the written music.

The opportunity to improvise was not offered in the earliest edition, and the integrity of the *Sonata* remains intact even if the improvised sections are removed. Eliminating the solo sections should only occur if a performer is not accustomed to jazz improvisation. Woods allows experienced improvisers the freedom to take their time developing their ideas in performance because he does not always indicate a specific number of repeats in his improvised sections.

In the first movement Woods notates his primary melodic figures in a constant harmonic context that also serves as the harmony during improvisation. The second and fourth movements remain similar to the original edition and contain no significant opportunities for improvisation. Woods does indicate a few short expressive passages based on overtones and multiphonics, and includes a fourth movement cadenza combining written material with improvisation. In measure 108 the cadenza is open to interpretation, but maintaining style and pacing is an important detail to consider. Woods provides no chord reference, instead writing out note heads without stems to correlate elements and scale tone from the Bb concert blues scale. Despite rests in the piano score, involving the pianist adds to the intensity of the passage and helps direct the melody back into the concluding tempo at measure 110. In his 1981 recording, Morosco plays an extended cadenza that includes melodic references to earlier material and various quotes from recognizable jazz melodies.

The primary melody in the first movement begins with the sixteenth-note pick ups to measure 52. After stating three variations on the same 16 measure form, the saxophonist improvises on that same harmonic framework starting at measure 100. The interlude from measure 118 to 134 that bridges the space between the two solos is first heard in measure 36 as an interlude that connects the introductory material to the primary melody. Beginning at measure 134, the piano solo incorporates the same harmony and form used during the saxophone solo. Woods ends the movement by recycling some of the introductory material.

The third movement begins in 5/4 time with a modal saxophone melody that presents an unexpected change of character. Woods created a new section, from measure 30 to measure 54, in order to include an extra place for the saxophone to improvise. Based on the chord structure, the form of the solo section is an eight measure phrase followed by a twelve measure phrase. Again, the number of repeats is subject to the performers. Harmonically, the solo section begins and ends in the concert key of G Dorian minor. A contrasting legato section in 4/4 time follows the saxophone solo at measure 57. The closing material, starting at measure 91, is a direct repeat of the opening material. Woods creates continuity by writing a piano "segue" into and out of the third movement. "One of the major differences of this work, compared to others, is not that it incorporates a jazz style into a concert piece, but that it requires the performers to take a creative as well as re-creative attitude in its preparation and performance."[26]

---

[26] Victor Morosco, "Notes on Interpretation and Performance," *Phil Woods Sonata for alto saxophone and piano,* Score (Rottenburg N., Germany: Advance Music, 1997).

There are moments in the sonata where articulation requires specific interpretation, and there are only a few editorial marks describing the length or style of eighth note passages. Most of the slurs within the revised edition make stylistic sense and should be followed; however, when there is an overall lack of slurs, the pattern could become more like the traditional jazz approach of articulating every other note in a series of eighth or sixteenth notes. As an example, Woods writes "jazz legato" at measure 52 in the first movement, but the final stylistic decision should be decided by both performers to help match their phrasing and style on each instrument.

Bill Dobbins – *Sonata*

Pianist Bill Dobbins composed his saxophone *Sonata* "…partially with the intention of stimulating the growing interest between jazz and classical music, and encouraging creative musicians to become familiar with the vocabulary and performance practices of both."[27] The work premiered in Angers, France at a 1990 conference celebrating the 150th anniversary of the saxophone. Bill Dobbins is currently professor of jazz studies and contemporary music at the University of Rochester, Eastman School of Music. He joined the faculty in 1973 and contributed his ideas to the design and development of the jazz studies curricula.[28]

Unlike the Phil Woods *Sonata*, melodic continuity in the Dobbins *Sonata* relies on the ability of the duo to develop their improvisations in clear relation to the surrounding written melodies as improvised passages are weaved into the texture. The

[27] Dobbins, Bill, "Sonata for Soprano or Tenor Saxophone and Piano," (Rottenburg, N., Germany: Advance Music, 1991).
[28] Bill Dobbins, "Biography," Eastman School of Music Faculty Page, http://www.esm.rochester .edu/faculty/dobbins_bill (accessed March 2, 2012).

performer cannot remove these sections without destroying the overall consistency of the composition.

The first movement alternates between two distinct stylistic characters, simplified in this study as ‘A’ and ‘B’ sections. Sudden increases in tempo begin at the start of all three ‘B’ sections and improvisation consistently occurs only during the ‘A’ sections. After an unhurried introduction, the piano transitions into a jazz waltz with an easy swing feeling. The saxophone enters at measure 19 with a delicate, tonal melody that leads into a sudden change of character and tempo at measure 40. The ‘B’ section features chromatic passages, even eighth notes, and an agitated piano accompaniment. A return to the easy swing feeling begins at measure 61 and leads unnoticeably into the first improvised section. The saxophonist improvises for 48 measures over the harmonic sequence heard in the ‘A’ sections. Dobbins constructed a unique background of non-traditional harmony for *Sonata*, and many of the chords are written with bass notes contrary to the primary chord tones.

Isolated, the root movement is deceivingly simple, with five significant pedal points throughout the 48 measure phrase. The written melody at measure 123 is in the style of the agitated ‘B’ section and immediately enters with even eighth notes at a faster tempo. As the saxophonist reaches the end of the improvisation, the melody should prepare the audience for the sudden change by matching the rhythmic character and register of what comes next in the composition. The written melody will then sound logical and possibly spontaneous. Beginning at measure 163 the pianist improvises for 46 measures and concludes by transitioning into a variation on

the ‘B’ section. A short coda closes the movement after a brief reiteration of the opening ‘A’ section melody.

In the second movement, the pianist improvises following the opening melodic statement from the saxophonist and a piano introduction merges into a slow ballad tempo at measure 8. An improvised piano solo begins at measure 36 and lasts for 32 measures, concluding with a notated four measure interlude that connects into the upcoming saxophone solo. Similar to the first movement, the saxophone melody in the second movement of *Sonata* leads smoothly into a 16 measure improvisation beginning at measure 68. Dobbins writes unique harmony with extremely specific extensions, often containing chromatic root movement. Finding common chord tones and analyzing the relationship of scales to chords is a necessary for performance preparation.

The final melody includes fragments of repeated material in disguise. Measures 83 to 87 are the same as measures 16 to 21, and measures 95 to 100 are the same as measures 28 to 33. A brief notated saxophone cadenza followed by a piano variation based on the introduction closes the second movement.

Improvisation in the third movement is approached through a natural extension of the written melody. The score includes a D.S. al coda to save space, allowing the pianist the opportunity to improvise over the same harmony as the saxophonist. The piano opens with a driving introductory phrase, outlining the character of the third movement. The opening saxophone melody at measure 12 is recycled later in the movement through variation, including a direct repeat at measure 77. After the D.S., the repeated melody is interrupted by a jump to the coda.

Of the three movements, the musical character of the third movement improvised section differs greatly because the solo begins with a pedal point on a diminished chord. Thirty-two measures of tension are followed by 24 measures of logical root movement based on densely notated chords.

Following the saxophone solo in measure 99 the accompaniment style changes to an ostinato in the style of a salsa. This new melody acts like an interlude before the piano solo, ending with a variation on the melodic phrase used to lead into the saxophone solo. At measure 157 Dobbins writes "open – continue counterpoint in tempo [and] counterpoint continues through bar 68" in the score, allowing the pianist to continue a solo improvisation before transitioning back into the diminished chord harmony used for the repeated solo section. New material in the coda is similar to the opening melodic structures. Overall, the written melodies in the Dobbins *Sonata* are not as difficult as the other two jazz influenced sonatas, but because each movement incorporates exceptionally challenging harmony in both the saxophone and piano parts, the Dobbins *Sonata* remains ideal only for experienced improvisers.

Ramon Ricker – *Jazz Sonata*

Ramon Ricker is currently professor of saxophone at the University of Rochester, Eastman School of Music, a position he began in 1972. He holds degrees from the University of Denver, Michigan State University, and a DMA in music education and clarinet from the Eastman School of Music. As an author he has written over twelve educational books, and composed at least two chamber works for

saxophone: *Jazz Sonata*, written for any B-flat or E-flat saxophone, and a piece titled *Solar Chariots*, written for soprano saxophone and piano.[29]

This study will feature a version of the *Jazz Sonata* written for alto saxophone and piano. Many of the melodies are similar, but a few minor alterations are sufficient enough to make the edition distinct from the B-flat version. According to the score, *Jazz Sonata* took inspiration from the sonatas of Phil Woods and Bill Dobbins. The work was premiered by Ramon Ricker and Bill Dobbins in Naples, Florida in May of 1991.[30]

Ricker's *Jazz Sonata* treats improvisation in a similar format as Dobbins and Woods, as both performers have an opportunity to improvise, and the harmony remains the same for both solo sections. The first movement breaks down into three main harmonic sections: "A", "B", and "C". After a slow 22 measure introduction, the tempo picks up along with the rhythmic activity of the primary saxophone melody. The "A" section lasts from measure 27 to measure 54, where the melody becomes jagged and sporadic at the outset of the "B" section. Conversely, the piano lowers in intensity at measure 54, playing lengthy low register pedal tones. This section is deceptive and may sound like an improvisation, mainly because the piano drops away in volume and slowly builds back up in activity, a performance technique common in jazz improvisations. By measure 70 the piano re-establishes the accompaniment, leading into an active send-off at measure 78 that begins the saxophone improvisation. The "A" section harmony occurs under the saxophone solo,

---

[29] Ramon Ricker, "Biography," Eastman School of Music Faculty Page, http://www.esm.rochester .edu/faculty/ricker_ramon (accessed March 2, 2012).
[30] Ramon Ricker, *Jazz Sonata*, (Rottenburg N., Germnay: Advance Music, 1994).

from measure 78 to measure 101, and returns in measure 121 for the duration of the piano solo.

Ricker writes a mixture of modal ideas and chord changes that are similar in construction to the Dobbins *Sonata*. He frequently uses harmony that places non-chord tones in the bass and incorporates unconventional or chromatic root movement. Pedal points similar to those heard throughout the piece are common in the brief 24 measure saxophone solo. New contrapuntal material, lasting from measures 148 to 164, is written after the piano solo. A direct repeat of the opening melody provides ending material, while a brief rhythmic motive closes the first movement.

The second movement begins slowly and stays at a ballad tempo until measure 20. At measure 20 the pulse remains the same but the movement takes on a double-time swing feeling. An active saxophone melody transitions abruptly into the solo section at measure 28. Ricker writes another pedal point at the outset of the improvised section, bringing tension to the harmonic accompaniment. The second half of the solo contains conventional root movement, and provides a necessary resolution leading back to the pedal point for the piano solo. The opening melody returns at measure 65 and a pensive, rhythmically simple coda brings the second movement ballad to a close.

The third movement is fast, contrapuntal, and repetitive, containing short bursts of unison playing and a constant rhythmic ostinato heard throughout both parts. An introduction based on the ostinato foreshadows the upcoming accompaniment figures. The saxophone melody at measure 11 is chromatic and linear, while the piano seems trapped in the repetitive rhythmic motive. A break occurs at measure 38 where

the piano becomes more contrapuntal in contrast to the saxophone melody. In the middle of measure 47 the saxophonist and pianist switch roles and repeat the previous section again. From measures 67 to 74 both players continue the rhythmic ostinato as the tempo and volume decrease. Immediately at measure 75 the character, time signature, and tempo change to a slower jazz waltz featuring a contrasting diatonic melody. The easy swing feeling of the waltz transitions into an improvised piano solo that begins at measure 141 and is later repeated to allow a saxophone solo on the same chord changes. Near the end of the saxophone improvisation, the waltz melody slowly overtakes the melodic improvisation, closing the section. A perfect blend of ideas is necessary to connect the written material to the improvised melody. The waltz is the longest solo section in all three movements of Ricker's *Jazz Sonata*, and the harmony contains a mixture of complex extensions and chromatic root movement.

After the saxophone solo brings the tempo to a fermata, an agitated interlude slowly changes the melodic character back to the punctuated rhythms heard in the opening material. Measures 217 to 225 are a direct repeat of measures 6 to 13, and measures 226 to 266 are a direct repeat of measures 26 to 66. This allows a recap of the initial saxophone melody and both versions of the piano melody. As the recycled material ends in measure 266, a coda bridges the gap in the saxophone melody. A rhythmic pattern starting with the piano in measure 271 envelops the saxophone melody and recalls the ending of the first movement. A long final note in the altissimo register under a simple melodic line in the piano closes Ricker's third movement in the same style as the Dobbins *Sonata*.

Conclusion

Although each of the twelve pieces in this study can be defined as being in a jazz context, the goal of this paper is to examine a deeper connection between the performance technique of improvisation and contemporary compositional notation. Improvisation in a concert saxophone setting does not always relate to jazz performance practice, but does require the performers to consider specific possibilities in their approach to notated compositions. In a piece containing jazz improvisation, compelling chord changes, harmonic structure, and knowledge of melodic construction from the performer is necessary for an improvised melody to hold a listener's interest. Every performance technique is a product of the compositional content, and notated compositional ideas, no matter how abstract, are decided before the music is performed.

The sequence of recitals in this study offers a logical pedagogical pathway for any concert saxophonist interesting in exploring literature that will prepare them to improvise concert works that require jazz improvisation. The first two recitals feature works that require no improvisation, but the compositional technique of unmeasured phrases simulates a sense of rhythmic freedom associated with improvised melodies. Within the four jazz pieces, the performers are able to explore advanced rhythmic and melodic freedom despite the differing compositional approach to tempo.

Each piece in this study requires creative input from performers because the notated and improvised sections are only fully realized through the act of personalized performance. Concert saxophonists in the 21st century should develop

performance skills in all major genres. This goal is readily achieved by performing works that contain the three compositional techniques described in this study. Although there is no correlation between improvisation and technical facility, there is no longer a firm distinction between classical and jazz traditions as evidenced by the four jazz pieces included in this study. Through new commissions the concert saxophone repertoire is continually expanding, and performers should welcome new styles and perform pieces that emphasize their personal strengths.

Works Cited

Ambassador Duo, The. *Brilliance*. EQ 21, Equilibrium. CD. 1999.

Berliner, Paul F. *Thinking In Jazz*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1994.

Bolcom, William. *Lilith*. Milwaukee, WI: Hal Leonard, 1989.

Brennan, David Andrew. "A Performer's Analysis of Phil Woods' *Sonata for Alto Saxophone and Piano*." DMA diss., University of California, 2004. In ProQuest Dissertations and Theses, http://search.proquest.com/docview/275733582?accountid=14696 (accessed June 25, 2011).

Bristow, John Brent. "Donald Sinta: A Biographical Look at his Contributions to the Saxophone Repertoire through Commissions, Recordings and Major Performances." DMA diss., University of Memphis, 2008. In ProQuest Dissertations and Theses, http://search.proquest.com/docview/304576595?accountid=14696 (accessed February 26, 2012).

Bunte, James. "A Player's Guide to the Music of Ryo Noda: Performance and Preparation of *Improvisation I* and *Mai*." DMA diss., University of Cincinnati, 2010. In ProQuest Dissertations and Theses, http://search.proquest.com/docview/762032245?accountid=14696 (accessed October 18, 2011).

Cain, Joren. "The Saxophone Sonatas of Edison Denisov: A Study of Continuity." *Saxophone Symposium* 24, (1999): 26-40.

Cairns, Zachary A. "Multiple-Row Serialism in Three Works by Edison Denisov." PhD diss., University of Rochester, 2010. In ProQuest Dissertations and Theses, http://search.proquest.com/docview/521946716?accountid=14696 (accessed November 14, 2011).

Cinquina, Joseph. "Melodic Cohesiveness in the Composition *Sonata for Alto Sax and Piano*, Composed by Phil Woods." MA diss., University of South Florida, 1992.

Dabney, Denise. "A Multicultural Approach to Edison Denisov's *Sonata: for Alto Saxophone and Piano*: Diverse Analytical Insights." *The Saxophone Symposium* 20 (Spring-Summer-Fall 1995): 10-17.

Delangle, Claude. *The Russian Saxophone*. Bis-CD-765, Grammofon AB BIS. CD. 1995.

_____. *Under The Sign of the Sun*. Bis-CD-1357, Bis Records AB. CD. 2007.

Denisov, Edison. *Sonate*. Paris, France: Editions Musicales Alphonse Leduc, 1973.

Dobbins, Bill. "Biography." Eastman School of Music Faculty Page. http://www.esm.rochester.edu/faculty/dobbins_bill (accessed March 2, 2012).

_____. *Sonata*. Rottenburg N., Germany: Advance Music, 1991.

Duo Nuova. *Visions*. Centaur CRC 2280, Centaur Records, Inc. CD. 1995.

Ford, Chris. "Eleven Jazz-Influenced Works for Concert Saxophone." DMA diss., University of Maryland, 1991.

Ford, Shannon Marie. "*Wings*: A Performance Analysis of Joan Tower's Work for Solo Alto Saxophone." Master's thesis, Bowling Green State University, 1995.

Gast, Kim Gregory. "An Annotated Bibliography of Alto Saxophone Sonatas Published from 1980-1990." DMA diss., University of Northern Colorado, 1994. In ProQuest Dissertations and Theses, http://search.proquest.com/docview/304126077?accountid=14696 (Digital 3-10-11).

Gillingham, David. "Biography and Compositions." Personal Website. http://www.gillinghammusic.com (accessed February 19, 2012).

_____. *Mindset*. Medfield, MA: Dorn Publications, 2000.

Gordon, Dan. "Origins and Early History of the Ibert *Concertino*." *The Saxophone Symposium* 20 (Spring-Summer-Fall 1995): 28-39.

Graves, William Stuart. "An Historical Investigation of and Performance Guide for Jacques Ibert's *Concertino da Camera*." DMA diss., University of Texas at Austin, 1998. In ProQuest Dissertations and Theses, http://search.proquest.com/docview/304457193?accountid=14696 (accessed February 9, 2012).

Haar, Ora Paul. "The Influence of Jazz Elements of Edison Denisov's *Sonata for Alto Saxophone and Piano*." DMA diss., University of Texas at Austin, 2004. In ProQuest Dissertations and Theses, http://search.proquest.com/docview/305125687?accountid=14696 (accessed June 30, 2011).

Harvey, Paul. *Saxophone*. London, England: Halstan and Co., 1995.

Helton, Jonathan. "Edison Denisov's *Sonata for Saxophone and Piano*: An Analysis for the Performer." *The Saxophone Symposium* 25 (2000): 16-37.

Hemke, Fred L. "The Early History of the Saxophone." DMA diss., University of Wisconsin, 1975. In ProQuest Dissertations and Theses, http://search.proquest.com/docview/302798409?accountid=14696 (accessed February 9, 2012).

Hulsebos, Mark. “Cecil Leeson: The Pioneering of the Concert Saxophone in America from 1921 to 1941.” DMA diss., Ball State University, 1989. In ProQuest Dissertations and Theses, http://search.proquest.com/docview/303663548?accountid=14696 (accessed December 1, 2011).

Hunter, Laura. “Exploring the Concert Saxophone Repertoire: William Bolcom’s *Lilith*.” *Saxophone Journal* 12, no. 3 (fall 1987): 18-23.

Hurwitz, Siegmund. *Lilith*: *The First Eve*. Einsiedeln, Switzerland: Daimon Verlag, 1992.

Ibert, Jacques. *Concertino da Camera*. Paris, France: Editions Musicales Alphonse Leduc, 1935.

Ingham, Richard, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to the Saxophone*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1998.

James, Matthew T. “Extemporizing Awakened: Saxophonist Branford Marsalis’s Approach to the Cadenza for *Concertino da Camera for Alto Saxophone and Eleven Instruments* by Jacques Ibert.” DMA diss., University of North Texas, 2006. In ProQuest Dissertations and Theses, http://search.proquest.com/docview/305294279?accountid=14696 (accessed September 27, 2011).

Jacobson, Michael Neal. “A Comparison of the Improvisational Performance Practices of Jazz Saxophonists Charlie Parker and Julian Adderley with the Embellishments Found in the *Methodical Sonatas* of Georg Philipp Telemann.” DMA diss., University of Texas at Austin, 1999. In ProQuest Dissertations and Theses, http://search.proquest.com/docview/304527391?accountid=14696 (accessed February 9, 2012).

Kidd, Elizabeth Berry. “The Lilith Myth: It’s History, Psychology and Role in Contemporary Art Music as Portrayed in William Bolcom’s *Lilith for Alto Saxophone and Piano*.” MA diss., Ball State University, 1998.

Kirchner, Bill, ed. *The Oxford Companion to Jazz*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2000.

Klein, Alex. *Chicago Symphony Orchestra’s Principal Oboist*. BR1029CD, Boston Records. CD. 1999.

Koltuv, Barbara Black. *The Book of Lilith*. Berwick, Maine: Nicolas-Hays, 1986.

Laederich, Alexandra. “Ibert, Jacques.” In *Grove Music Online*. *Oxford Music Online*, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/13675 (accessed April 6, 2012).

Lennon, John Anthony. *Distances Within Me*. Ed. by Erik Holmgren. Medfield, MA: Dorn Publications, 1981.

_____. *Lennon*. Composers Recordings. CD. 1994.

Londeix, Jean-Marie. *A Comprehensive Guide to the Saxophone Repertoire: 1844 2003*. Cherry Hill, NJ: Roncorp, 2003.

Long, Jeremy. "*Sonata for Alto Saxophone and Piano* by Phil Woods: An Improvisation-Specific Performer's Guide." DMA diss., University of Cincinnati, 2008. In ProQuestDissertations and Theses, http://search .proquest.com/docview/275733582?accountid=14696 (accessed July 11, 2011).

Mauk, Steven. "A Master Lesson on Noda's *Improvisation I*." Ithaca College Faculty Page. http://www.faculty.ithaca.edu/mauk/docs/NodaImprovI.pdf (accessed February 16, 2012).

Marsalis, Branford. *Creation*. SK89251, Sony Classical. CD. 2001.

McAllister, Timothy. *In Transit*. Innova 652, Innova Recordings. CD. 2006.

Morosco, Victor. *Double Exposure*. MS102CD, Morsax Music. CD. 2001.

_____. "Notes on Interpretation and Performance." *Phil Woods Sonata for alto saxophone and piano*. Score. Rottenburg N., Germany: Advance Music, 1997.

_____. "Phil Woods *Sonata*." Liner notes for *Double Exposure*. MS102CD, Morsax Music. CD. 2001.

Morrill, Dexter. "Biography." Personal Website. http://www.dextermorrill.com/bio (accessed February 21, 2012).

_____. *Getz Variations*. Hamilton, NY: Chenango Valley Music Press, 1984.

_____. "Getz Variations." Liner Notes for *Music for Stanford*. CRC 2732. Centaur Records. CD.2004.

_____. *Music for Stanford*. CRC 2732. Centaur Records. CD. 2004.

Mule, Marcel. *'Le Patron' of the Saxophone*. CC 0013, Clarinet Classics. CD. 1996.

Nettl, Bruno et al. "Improvisation." In *Grove Music Online*. *Oxford Music Online*. http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/13738 (accessed March 8, 2012).

Noda, Ryo. *Improvisation I*. Paris, France: Editions Musicales Alphonse Leduc, 1974.

Norsworthy, Michael and Gerard McBurney. "Denisov, Edison." In *Grove Music Online*. *Oxford Music Online*, (accessed February 26, 2012).

Pereira, Filomena. "Lilith: The Edge of Forever." MA diss., San Jose State University, 1995. In ProQuest Dissertations and Theses, http://search.proquest.com/docview/304231972?accountid=14696 (accessed February 20, 2012).

Perrine, John. "Crossover Considerations: Performing Three Works by Ludmilla Ulehla, Phil Woods, and Bill Dobbins." DMA diss., Louisiana State University, 2002. In ProQuest Dissertations and Theses, http://search.proquest.com/docview/305518492?accountid=14696 (accessed July 1, 2011).

Pittel, Havey. *Moving Along*. CD655, Crystal Records. CD. 1997.

Rahbari, Sohre. *Music for Saxophone and Orchestra*. 8.554784, Naxos. CD. 1999.

Ricker, Ramon. "Biography." Eastman School of Music Faculty Page. http://www.esm.rochester.edu/faculty/ricker_ramon (accessed March 2, 2012).

_____. *Jazz Sonata*. Rottenburg N., Germany: Advance Music, 1994.

Romain, James. *In Friendship*. Centaur CRC 2916, Centaur Records, Inc. CD. 2008.

Quatour de Saxes Deffayet. *Le Saxophone Francais*. 7243 5 72360 2 7, EMI Music France. CD. 1997.

Sampen, John. *The Electric Saxophone*. CPS-8636, Capstone Records. CD. 1997.

_____. *Visions in Metaphor*. Troy 442, Albany Records. CD. 1996.

Schuller, Gunther. *Early Jazz: Its Roots and Musical Development*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1968.

Scruton, Roger. *The Aesthetics of Music*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1997.

Sugawa, Nobuya. *Plays Honda, Yoshimatsu, Ibert, Larson*. Chan 10466, Chandros Records. CD. 2008.

Telemann, Georg Philipp. *Twelve Fantasias for Flute Solo*. Ed. by Peter Reidemeister. Switzerland: Amadeus, 1992.

Tower, Joan. *Wings*. New York, NY: Associated Music Publishers, 1991.

Umble, James C. *Jean-Marie Londeix: Master of the Modern Saxophone*. Glenmore, PA: Roncorp, 2000.

Wen, Andy. "*Improvisation I* and *Pulse 72* by Ryo Noda: An Analytical and Interpretive Study." DMA diss., University of Georgia, 1995. In ProQuest Dissertations and Theses, http://search.proquest.com/docview/304198959?accountid=14696 (accessed February 16, 2012).

Wilson, Grant Bradley. "The Lilith Enigma: Plotting the Transformation of an Archetype." MA diss., California State University, Dominguez Hills, 2002. In ProQuest Dissertations and Theses, http://search.proquest.com/docview/250129472?accountid=14696 (accessed February 20, 2012).

Woods, Phil. *Sonata*. Rottenburg N., Germany: Advance Music, 1997.

Wytko, Joseph. *Passions*. ACA CM20092, ACA Digital Recordings. CD. 2009.