A Saxophone Recital of Music Written for the Saxophone Published Since 1977

A graduate project submitted in partial fulfillment

For the degree of Master of Music in Music,

In Performance

By

Gabriel Rodriguez Botsford

May 2015
The graduate project of Gabriel Rodriguez Botsford is approved:

______________________________________ ____________________
Dr. Liviu Marinescu Date

______________________________________ ____________________
Dr. Lawrence Stoffel Date

______________________________________ ____________________
Professor Jerry Luedders, Chair Date

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, NORTHRIDGE
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Signature Page</td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table of Contents</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter One: Composer Biographies</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Two: Instances of Extended Technique</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Three: Practice and Preparation</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Works Cited</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix: Recital Program</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ABSTRACT

A Saxophone Recital of Music Published Since 1977

By

Gabriel Rodriguez Botsford

Master of Music in Music, in Performance

This thesis examines four works performed in a graduate recital of music written for the saxophone since the birth of the performer. The program presented music, some of which is not often concertized, selected to highlight various contemporary techniques, as well as pedagogical considerations. This performance is part of a tradition among saxophone players of western concert music to bolster the reputation of the saxophone as a legitimate instrument for composers’ attention. All of the pieces in the program stretch the limits of the saxophone’s expressive qualities. While some of the program cannot be considered avant-garde by 2015 standards, within the context of the history of the saxophone, it certainly includes literature that has substantially forwarded the expressive potential of this instrument.
Chapter One

The recital was not simply a performance, but an academic exercise as well. The choices in repertoire were both the culmination of a stage of development and a continuation of the repertoire I have been learning to perform. Contemporary music is also artistically demanding in that each piece calls for its own unique performance aesthetic; sound, appropriate tone color, articulations and other parameters must be well thought out.

As an older student who undertook private study for the first time in Fall 2010 and classes in the Western tradition for the first time in Spring 2009, it was my goal to become the best performer I could, as efficiently as possible. I did this by selecting music that is technically demanding as well as being intellectually satisfying. The physical process undertaken in order to overcome old habits and create new ones was time consuming and exhaustive. I spent many hours on simple movements, learning to play with unrestricted airflow, identifying unwanted tension and unnecessary action. I was battling years of maladaptive physical habits. The practice of observation, willful inhibition, and starting a new pattern rewarded me with change. It also established the kind of mental discipline I would later use to develop my ability to play extended techniques.

Consideration of the history and development of saxophone literature was important in selecting the compositions for this program. The program reflects my taste for modern concert music, which comes from my appreciation of music that is both physically demanding as a performer and intellectually satisfying as a listener. A decision
was made to include only music written in for the saxophone in my lifetime; this has precedence within the saxophone community, which struggles to establish the legitimacy of the saxophone as an instrument as worthy of being written for as any other.

Saxophonists themselves have long faced the thorny problem of repertoire, both in terms of quality and quantity. Although orphaned for the sins of its youth, the saxophone is currently enjoying one of its most fruitful phases, with the emergence of a stability not dissimilar to that being experienced by contemporary composers.¹

Many composers have chosen to compose for the saxophone because it offers a fresh voice, one that is free from the restraints of tradition, given that it was invented in a relatively recent time. The saxophone offers composers a voice of incredible expressive flexibility, which is highly suited to contemporary music practices.

As a culmination of years studying the saxophone, the recital included works that demand the maximum of the performer’s abilities. Each piece in the program presents unique challenges for performance, but all of them share a few attributes. The most easily identifiable of these shared attributes is the use of extended techniques. These are techniques beyond what would be considered a normal array of skills, including proper tone, vibrato, articulations and releases and interpretation of standard repertoire. While each piece has its own vocabulary of contemporary techniques that are tailored to the given composition’s expressive goals, they all share some, most notably the use of the altissimo range of the saxophone. As such, the history and composition habits of each composer are worth a further analysis.

David Maslanka (born 1943) is an American composer whose love for the

saxophone is evident in his large output of works either for or emphasizing this instrument. Such works include his *Sonata for Alto Saxophone and Piano*, *Concerto for Alto Saxophone*, *Recitation Songbook for Saxophone Quartet*, *Music for Saxophone and Marimba* and *Concerto for Saxophone Quartet and Wind Ensemble*.

Maslanka, in addition to having a large body of work, is a well-respected composer. “He has received numerous grants and awards including four MacDowell Colony fellowships [...] He has held teaching positions at Genesco College, SUNY (1970–74), Sarah Lawrence College (1974–80) New York University (1980–1981) and Kingsborough College, CUNY (1981–1990) “His music is characterized by romantic gestures, tonal language, and clearly articulated large scale structures.”

Born in 1970, Liviu Marinescu is a Romanian composer currently living in the United States of America. His musical direction is remarkable in that it mirrors the role of the saxophone in modern Western art music in many ways. “Marinescu developed a growing interest in the distortion and twisting of established compositional forms and practices, through the use of paraphrases and quotations [...] In recent years, a renewed interest in combining acoustic instruments with electronic sounds has led to the development of new sonic gestures and the creation of a more personal musical language.”

As with musical artists who choose their means of expression among the less established instruments, the search for legitimacy that all saxophone performers must

---

engage in is a constant struggle. There is an argument to be made that composers who search for new means of expression in acoustic instruments are naturally drawn to the saxophone.

Edison Denisov (April 6, 1929–November 24, 1996) was a Russian composer whose interest in the avant-garde and works of other nationalities prevented him from receiving his due credit as composer and educator until the fall of the Soviet Union. He eventually “accepted in the early 1990s 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 distasteful.” The aspects Denisov objected to are the Soviet rejection of anything deemed outside of the narrow constraints of Soviet value for art.

Takashi Yoshimatsu (born 1953) is a Japanese composer who, similar to Denisov, was educated in math and science, turning towards composition as an adult. His compositional style is a product of both his time and his reaction to it. “While absorbing these (avant-garde techniques) Yoshimatsu opposed the general fashion, returning to popular rhythms and romantic melody and coming to be regarded as the standard bearer of Neo-Romanticism in Japan.” The goal of his compositions is oriented towards his interpretation of beauty, rather than being a true avant-garde endeavor.

---


Chapter Two

Each piece has its own harmonic language, as well as its own artistic sensibilities related to both modern compositional practices and the use of extended techniques. All of the pieces reference past styles; what sets the music of this recital apart from nearly all music that existed before 1945 is the use of extended techniques as essential compositional vocabulary, rather than a non-obligatory suggestion. The two seminal works for that established the saxophone as a legitimate instrument for western art music are Jacques Ibert’s *Concertino da Camera* and Alexander Glazunov’s *Concerto for Alto Saxophone*. Glazunov writes in an optional high G seven measures from the end and an optional high C "8va. ad libitum" for the last note, though a performer can opt to play within the natural range of the instrument. Ibert foreshadows the modern use of altissimo in the first movement by including the notes G, G-sharp and A as the last notes of a melodic line, but with the instructions 8va ad lib, placing them in the saxophone’s altissimo register. In the second movement there is a phrase that Ibert gives the performer the option to play in the altissimo, again giving the instructions 8va ad lib.

In order to properly interpret the music on this program a performer must analyze each work for its extended techniques and the context within which each incident is placed. The sounds sought after by each composer are integral to their works. The musical imagination required to consider the challenges inherent in interpreting such

---

7 The note high G on the alto saxophone corresponds to the note B-flat that sits on top of the first ledger line on the grand staff. This is B-flat 5 in the International Standards Organization, wherein C4 is middle C. From here, the notes given will be those transposed for alto saxophone.

repertoire is developed from the traditions of the past but not held to limitations other than the imagination of contemporary composers. For those that interpret such music it is imperative to think about how to best integrate performance techniques with composers’ objectives because there can be no appreciable change of character when moving in and out of those techniques.

Sonata for Alto Saxophone and Piano, David Maslanka

Sonata for Alto Saxophone and Piano by David Maslanka is a large-scale work with a performance time of over a half an hour. The three movements are organized rather conventionally in a fast-slow-fast order, with the first movement in sonata form, the second in ternary form and the third is a seven part rondo. Maslanka uses contrast for dramatic effect, especially with regards to tempo and texture. In the outer movements, there are contrasting tempi that add another dimension of compositional expression. The inner movement contains accelerandi, ritardandi and dynamic shapes that create contrast within the movement. Much of the fast portions of the outer movements occur with the piano part either overlapping the saxophone part or doubling it, using thirty-second note runs, creating a thick and vibrant texture.

The first movement begins at a moderate tempo, MM=90-96; the quarter note pulse remains there without much change, save for rubato moments, rallentendi and ritardandi, but there are moments of double time that precede an entire section of double time feel, utilizing showers of thirty-second notes. It is in the contrast between the elegant, understated mood of the beginning and the “turbulent, eruptive quality that takes
this music away from its historical models and make it very much a piece of our time.9

This contrast is first foreshadowed after the calm opening.

Measure 19 contains the note G in the altissimo range (see Ex. 1), the first occurrence of the use of altissimo in the piece. One must examine the preceding and following notes to
determine what fingerings would work best. The high G is part of a phrase that is a melody made up of note values mostly longer than half note. It is an exposed part that calls for classical era like clarity.

Measures 62 through 69 foreshadow the high-energy section to come, as well as initiating the pattern of frantic/calm. This passage exploits different characteristics of the altissimo range of the saxophone. In the thirty-second note runs, high G is used without deference to its status as an altissimo note (see Ex. 2). The nearly fanfare section afterwards seems to call for the brass edge of the instrument. The tessitura used is somewhere between where a flute and trumpet would produce their characteristic tones,

quite a feat for an alto instrument. This presents a few different challenges concerning voicing, airstream, and fingerings.

Example 2 David Maslanka, *Sonata for Alto Saxophone*, Mvt. 1, mm. 62–69

The music returns to a calm section of neo-classical clarity before slowly escalating the tension through increased note activity and crescendo over a long period of time. In what is the densest texture of the first movement, Maslanka writes what are essentially descending trills, but explicitly written out as thirty-second notes (see Ex. 3). Altissimo needs to be played as fluid as the rest of the range, with equal tone quality. The dense texture, mixed with the motion of the trills creates an agitated, murky feeling that prepares a contrast to the forthcoming fanfare section. This section ends with a reiteration of the material that earlier foreshadowed the more energetic part that transitions the music to its climax, a triumphant, arpeggiated section that uses Baroque style ornamentation to emphasize long notes. The contrast between calm and frenetic sections is common to all of the movements of the Sonata.
The second movement is reflective and uses *rubato*; Maslanka gives the instructions “very expressive – use straight tone and various vibratos *ad lib* where appropriate.”\(^{10}\) The music creates a mood of restlessness through its various instructions for tempo and dynamics. Indicative of the feeling Maslanka seeks to create, he uses tempo instructions such as “hesitate… a tempo”\(^{11}\) in measure 3. In measure 8 he instructs the performer to play “haltingly.”\(^{12}\) One must also prepare the notation of each piece; Maslanka writes an *accelerando* into the beams of the notes, as seen in figure. The instruction to hesitate on the first few notes is a way of describing a *ritardando* followed by an *accelerando*. One must consider why this would be different than a written *ritard* and *accelerando*. Maslanka could have opted to use the old terms, but is seeking a different sound, an American sound. He uses this twice more, in measures 12 and 14.


\(^{11}\) Ibid., 7.

\(^{12}\) Ibid., 7.
Example 4 David Maslanka, *Sonata for Alto Saxophone*, Mvt. 2, m. 2

The next time Maslanka uses altissimo he calls for a diminuendo from *forte* to *piano*, starting in measure 18 (see Ex. 5). Previous altissimo notes were marked *forte* or more. Maslanka is writing for changes in altissimo dynamics as though they were any other register.

Example 5 David Maslanka, *Sonata for Alto Saxophone*, Mvt. 2, mm.12–23

After the opening rubato section, measure 34 begins the strict time section, where the piano leads. Maslanka instructs the performer to “enter softer than the piano.”\(^{13}\) The movement builds by sequence to a climax in measure 32 where the melody lands on high B. The subsequent let down takes us through fast passages that move between the second

\(^{13}\) *Ibid.*, 22.
and third octave, requiring the performer to play the altissimo register with the same facility and tone as any other range of the instrument. There is then a fermata with instructions to “take time, let this moment settle.” The piece repeats the climax resolution patterns two more times. The other side of the climax must be played gently to create the most contrast. Given the instructions at the beginning of the movement regarding vibrato, performers must carefully consider how to employ their vibrato.

Classical repertoire is distinguished by a generalised (sic) use of vibrato, but in contemporary music the use of this tonal ornament is less systematic. Many composers require a particular sound: Alain Louvier (Cinq Ephémères), Ryo Noda (Improvisations, Mai) and Stockhausen (In Freundshaft) note precisely what must be vibrated, the speed or amplitude, and the nature of the undulation, pitch vibrato (obtained by jaw movement) or intensity vibrato (variation of the air-speed). This usage is similar to ornamental Baroque vibrato, which was considered to be separate from the sonority.14

This is not a matter of using one vibrato, nor an array of vibratos, but how to shift from one vibrato to the next artistically, and how to begin vibrato from a straight tone and back. Long descending lines of note values greater than a quarter note require vibrato.

Movement 3 is the most high-energy of all the pieces. It has fast moving passages, extensive use of the altissimo register and requires endurance to maintain intensity. The opening statements are indicative of the kind of contrast Maslanka creates in each movement and for the piece overall. The opening gesture, a declamatory motive, contains a diminuendo from fortissimo to piano in four beats. This is similar to the mix between fast moving passages and sustained long notes. Consideration of proper altissimo techniques must be at the forefront of the performer’s mind when analyzing the piece.

14 Delangle and Michat, 174.
This is one of many examples of passages where the notes move in and out of the altissimo range with no regard to it being any different (see Ex. 6); a performer must choose fingerings carefully.

Example 6 David Maslanka, *Sonata for Alto Saxophone*, Mvt. 3, m. 38–45

In measure 142, Maslanka gives the instructions shown in Example 7.

Example 7 David Maslanka, *Sonata for Alto Saxophone*, Mvt. 3, mm. 141–143

The instructions only describe dynamics and that strangled broken cry. A strangled and broken cry can be interpreted in many different ways on the saxophone: out of tune playing, multiphonics, dropping down an octave, pitch bends are all possibilities. The only wrong choice would be ignoring the composer’s instructions.
This movement also contains specific performance instructions not directly related to sound, seen in Example 8.

Example 8 David Maslanka, *Sonata for Alto Saxophone*, Mvt. 3, mm. 175–181

In measure 176, Maslanka instructs to pantomime; as there is no way for a listener of an audio recording to understand this, it is obviously a live performance instruction. The piano is playing block chords, and it is the performer’s duty to answer the question of why they would pantomime. After a series of 4 ‘popped’ notes, he instructs the performer to make “a tremendous squawk.” A squawk can be the sound of a bird or a loud complaint, but is in no way a normative sound for the saxophone. Maslanka uses language associated with animal sounds again in measure 302, calling for a “wild braying.” Braying, like squawking, is both a complaining sound and an animal sound (see Ex.9). Maslanka calling for the saxophone to make the sound usually a donkey speaks to the creativity of the composer and the respect he has for the saxophone’s expressive potential.
It is worth noting that Maslanka must be well aware of the peculiarities of the saxophone because, in the section that links the first two thirds of the A section with the last third, he chooses G-sharp to sound over and over again. G-sharp, along with G, is a note that can easily be over blown, is easy to play out of tune, and jumps the octave readily. It is a powerful place on the saxophone’s middle register. As in the second movement, Maslanka again writes the instruction “softer than the piano” adding “mournfully.” This “mournful” section culminates in a sustained high G-sharp with the instructions “rall... choke the tone to a strangled and broken cry.” \(^{15}\) Measure 262 begins a new section with figures that refer to previous material, as in the descending sextuplets and septuplets with displace couple of like notes displaced by the first note. Measure 286 starts with a tempo of up to MM=180, but with the dynamic level down to piano, leading to a series of increasingly wide interval gestures and the instructions “a wild braying –

\(^{15}\) Maslanka, 12.
brassy and frightening, can be multiphonic screech\textsuperscript{16} to a *molto diminuendo* with the instruction “tone can crack with *dim*.” (See Ex. 9). The rest of the piece contains no appearances of previously unused extended technique.

*Bach Variations*, Liviu Marinescu

*Bach Variations* for alto saxophone and pre-recorded sound is “As the title suggests... inspired by the music of J.S. Bach.”\textsuperscript{17} Although the compositional technique and overall sound of the work can be defined as post-modern, the connection with Bach’s music becomes obvious at the end of the work when a number of quotes from the first movement of the G major Cello Suite are subtly introduced.

Unique within this program, the composer requires the performer to play with recorded sounds, those of soprano, alto, tenor, and baritone saxophones playing fragments of the prelude to the suite in G major. To play along with the recording is to obey the words of the composer: “The entire piece is to be played in a free, *molto rubato* fashion, very much like a cadenza or an improvisation.”\textsuperscript{18}

The piece is written in three basic divisions, corresponding with the three pre-recorded tracks on the accompanying compact disc. Each section begins at the same time as the corresponding track, but the written music is intended to last longer than the prerecorded sounds for every section. The first part of the piece starts with a dramatic opening statement where the saxophone and prerecorded sounds are both loud, at a tempo marking of *MM=100, molto agitato*. This ends at measure 9 with a *fermata*. What is

\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., 17.
\textsuperscript{17} Marinescu, *Bach Variations*, (Los Angeles: Theodore Front) 2002, iii.
\textsuperscript{18} Ibid., iii.
instantly established is a melodic language involving large leaps, odd intervals, and quickly moving atonal gestures.

Marinescu uses notational techniques that are relatively standard, but must be learned if not previously encountered. He uses beaming to create an accelerando in measure 3. This mixed with his instructions to play rubato, mean that each performance will be slightly different, as the recorded sounds will never change pace. They may, however, be started at slightly different times due to human inconsistency or the time it takes the hardware to start. The opening section is shown in example 10.

Example 10 Liviu Marinescu  *Bach Variations*, mm. 1–10

![Example 10](image)

Tempo then changes to MM=60, *Timido, molto rubato*. At the outset of this section, the first phrase is broken into three statements by fermatas. Moving along *poco a poco crescendo*, *poco a poco accelerando* back to MM+100, the piece finally arrives at *fortissimo* dynamic level, with the instruction *pesante*, in measure 21. Measure 20 contrasts the *pesante* feel with an *accelerando* written into the feathered beaming of the
seven notes of the second half of the bar, as in measure 3, the beams go from eighth to thirty-second notes in one group. The second statement repeats with the added note D before a second climax on a multiphonic with a sforzando accent.

Marinescu uses multiphonics as a dynamic extension to the crescendo of bar 20, which arrives at fortissimo in bar 21, which is a three note, large interval, ascending gesture, repeated with one added note and a longer high E in bar 23 leading to the instruction (multiphonics), shown in Example 11.

Example 11 Liviu Marinescu Bach Variations, mm. 20–27

The music continues the pattern of climax and resolution as it moves toward the end. A diminuendo in bars 25 and 26 brings the energy down and the tempo resets to MM=60, timido, molto rubato at piano in measure 27. The final gesture of the first section is another written in accelerando on the beam going from eighth to thirty-second notes landing on a half note altissimo C, then a multiphonic marked sforzando, seen in example 12. The multiphonic serves as musical punctuation for the phase, providing the composer more energy than the fortissimo altissimo C.
Example 12 Liviu Marinescu *Bach Variations*, mm. 41–42

Section 2 is marked *molto agitato* and the opening is written as though one were listening to continuous running sixteenth notes music with tiny interruptions of silence, disrupted by occasional rhythmic displacement. The performer begins, as in the first section, when the recorded sounds begin. A thick, uncertain texture is created due to the relative unpredictability of the recorded sounds mixed with the live saxophone. Much is created in this composition with the contrast between busy and simple sections, louder and quieter dynamics. These contrasts are not just in tempo, harmony and dynamic, but in the sound of the saxophone’s different registers. A return of the wide interval gestures at very opening of the piece and the end of section one take us to altissimo E-flat, the highest note in the piece, sounded 4 times, once after each gesture. This is the climax of the piece and is shown in example 13.
Section 3 starts at measure 94 with the saxophone entering in measure 95 at MM=60, liberamente, molto rubato. The concluding measures fade out beginning in measure 106, with the recorded sounds ending in measure 111. The calming of the music is punctuated gently at the very end by Marinescu’s final use of extended technique with the instructions “blow, no pitch.”19

Not unique to Marinsecu’s work, the “blow (no pitch)” sound occurs later on the program. As with the previous use of techniques that give a dynamic or intensifying

19 Ibid., 4.
extension to the extreme loud end, this gives a composer a sonic phenomenon beyond the soft end of the dynamic spectrum.

*Sonate for Alto Saxophone and Cello*, Edison Denisov

The *Sonate for Alto Saxophone and Cello*, by Edison Denisov, is the most ambitious piece on the program, from a compositional standpoint. Written very close to the end of the composer’s life, it represents the acceptance of a lifetime of development as an artist. The piece relies on the manipulation of techniques used earlier in the composer’s *Sonate for Alto Saxophone and Piano* (1970).

Denisov uses the most variety of techniques in this piece out of any on the program. The techniques employed include flutter tongue, use of quarter tones, multiphonics, extensive use of altissimo (not just as a sustained ‘arrival’ note, but in quickly moving passages), and are used not as embellishments, but as integral to the texture of the music. Movement three suggests jazz, though the tone never should actually be jazz tone. Altissimo passages must be played no differently than passages at any other range of the instrument. Thus, altissimo is losing its designation as an extended technique and becoming accepted as a basic skill. Rather, for a certain caliber of musicians, initiated in the Western tradition, altissimo is normal.

The first movement begins with a declamatory statement from the saxophone directly followed by a response from the cello. The piece moves forward like this until measure 11. After a brief pause, the cello and saxophone proceed in matching, constant sixteenth note rhythm, but with different pitches. After a break in the pattern, it appears to resume, but the two voices start and stop at different times. This comes to an early climax
where the voices become virtually indistinguishable from each other. This is a result of blending timbres at the highest reaches of each instrument’s tessitura.  

Movement 3 also uses *glissandi*, meant to be made as smooth, uninterrupted transitions from one pitch to another, at different rhythmic values. Denisov uses *glissandi* five times in the third movement. What is interesting is the psycho-acoustic phenomenon that occurs when ears and minds uninitiated in the sounds of what westerners refer to as quarter tones, therefore outside the common practice of any era of Western music. Many other cultures understand quartertone music without second thought, as it is part of their identity, though what we hear as westerners, when quartertone changes are applied to moving lines, are *glissando* like effects. Movement 3, mimics jazz; there is an obvious attempt by Denisov to make the music sound somewhat random, as in an improvised performance. Quartertones and *glissandi* create effects that mirror the tonal smears jazz musicians use regularly. This sound comes from the blues roots of jazz, which are essential to authentic jazz performance. Denisov uses quartertones and glissandos to mimic the sounds of a jazz musician soloing while the cello plays what is essentially a walking bass for the first eleven measures of the movement. After that, the walking bass is interrupted by figures that resemble improvised solo playing here and there.

Denisov shares Maslanka’s respect for the ability of saxophonists; he treats the altissimo as any other part of the instrument, demonstrated first in measure 16 from movement one (see Ex. 15).

---

Denisov employs flutter tongue, an effect that can be interpreted by varying degrees of speed and amplitude of the tongue motion. The notation, three slashes, through the note stem, that are unconnected to the next stem, is shown in example 16.

Denisov has written music that has sounds that are still quite new to the ears of the Western world. The sound of quartertones is not one to which the average Western listener is likely to be accustomed. Denisov extensively employs quartertones; they are fundamental to the sound of his music. Notation of quartertones can be seen in example 17. To achieve facility, I referenced *Hello Mr. Sax, or Paramètres du Sax* for the fingering charts for microtonal pitches.\(^{21}\)

Movement 2 contains more extensive use of quartertones. They are not simply ornamental or passing; they are part of the harmonic language. The opening of the movement contains quartertones in both parts, seen in example 18.

Denisov Movement 2 is a slow tempo with the impression of rubato written in to the rhythms. Saxophone and cello often play one-quarter tone away from each other on sustained notes, creating an atmospheric tension. The challenges for the saxophonist include not overpowering the cello, especially when playing in the altissimo and multiphonics. Measures 36-40 require the player to play multiphonics with specific fingerings at pianissimo with a crescendo to piano then a decrescendo. Measures 49-51 are all notes in the altissimo that are to be played at p volume. The last three bars again call for multiphonics with both specific fingerings and specific notes notated. Also included in the written instructions are the dynamic pianissimo and the word dolce. Dolce means sweet, which is a word that one would not usually use to describe multiphonics.
While others make use of multiphonics, Denisov is unique among the composers on this program for three reasons. First, the sound that he is looking for is not a loud, blaring exclamatory sound, but an atmospheric, resonant kind of sound at low volume. He calls for specific fingerings for these harmonics. He is explicit about what note combinations he is seeking and he calls for you to remove one of the notes while maintaining the other two. The saxophone part containing this is shown in example 19.
Example 19 Edison Denisov, *Sonate for Alto Saxophone and Cello*, Mvt. 2, mm.33–40

Example 20, shows the final three measures of the saxophone part, where Denisov provides the instruction *dolce* for three different multiphonics to be played at a very light dynamic. The player must adhere to the written music and achieve this delicate passage with musical taste.

Example 20 Edison Denisov, *Sonate for Alto Saxophone and Cello*, Mvt. 2

In the third movement, Denisov makes use of the *glissando* in quartetone motion, shown in example 21.
Quartertones written in the altissimo legitimate the idea that it is no longer extended technique because the expectations of the composer are such. “Although this register will always be difficult (in terms of intonation, extreme dynamics, legato and running passages), it is now standard practice.” With regard to the music on this program, the use of altissimo is standard practice. Example 22 shows quartertones written in the extreme altissimo range. This requires careful intonation.

Example 22 Edison Denisov, *Sonate for Alto Saxophone and Cello*, Mvt. 3, m. 42

---

22 Delangle, 177.
**Fuzzy Bird Sonata**, Takashi Yoshimatsu

Yoshimatsu did not receive a formal music education. In many ways the lack of formal education has freed his experimentation. One of the elements used in the *Fuzzy Bird Sonata* is a characteristic Japanese sound. Blended with different elements of sound such as the use of walking bass, trills and glissandi, the piece contains many gestures that are reminiscent of bird sounds.

Yoshimatsu approaches music for classical saxophone as a new genre. He seeks all possible sounds that the saxophone can create – beautiful tone to “noise like” – in his compositions. The blending of other musical styles in one piece is one of Yoshimatsu’s compositional style, which can be observed in *Fuzzy Bird Sonata*; however, he does not limit himself to a single style.23 Avant-garde playing techniques such blowing without pitch, slap tongue, and altissimo all share a role in creating the music.

The first movement is titled Run, bird. The descending sixteenth note runs starting in measure 5 and occurring in measures 10, 15, 17 and 19 are clearly a representation of bird like behavior. The high pitches, descending lines with jagged displaced intervals suggest the furtive movements of a bird, too fast to be human. The trills in bars 7–9 and 11–13 are also clearly indicative of bird like sounds, warbles and chirps.

---

The first movement has a significant portion of melodic material that can be played with classical era sensibilities. Eighth and sixteenth note runs benefit from transparent, pure tone, in an unhurried manner, so the listener can hear each of them individually. The saxophone must match the clarity of the piano, especially during the many portions where they are in unison.

Yoshimatsu utilizes many techniques common to the other composers on the program, but differs in significant ways. *Glissando* is of major importance in the *Fuzzy Bird Sonata*. There are three basic ways to interpret *glissando*: chromatic (each note identifiable), chromatic smear, and smear *portamento*, where the pitch is bent through the range of the interval achieved. How to interpret this becomes of key importance to the performer, as later use of *glissando* is contextualized by this event.

The *Fuzzy Bird Sonata* uses different *glissandi* for different effects. In section B of movement 1, Yoshimatsu writes five glissandos, one of which carries the instructions *harmonique*, with note stems and beams that have open circles above showing an upward pitch direction. It is the only one specifically marked *gliss*.

The score indicates that this *harmonique/glissando* should be built by performing overtones; also, Yoshimatsu requires the performer to use alternate fingerings with the goal of creating high and strange sounds. Yoshimatsu does not clarify or
define these “strange” sounds; yet, they should be high in tessitura and unidentifiable, imitating the voice of a bird.²⁴

Yoshimatsu is seeking a sound that seems to slip and slide up the harmonic series. The random quality of this technique mixed with the timbre of the altissimo range make the saxophone sound bird like. In example 24 the specific notation from the score is shown.

Example 24 Takashi Yoshimatsu, Fuzzy Bird Sonata, Mvt. 1, mm. 16–19

Slap tongue is used to produce a snapped pizzicato like sound out of the saxophone. It is worth noting that in the *Cambridge Companion to the Saxophone*, despite the section that deals with slap tongue is the article titled “Jazz and rock techniques”, the author, David Roach, says: “This effect occurs as much in the classical saxophone as anywhere…”²⁵

²⁴ Ibid, 29.
Example 25 Takashi Yoshimatsu, Fuzzy Bird Sonata, Mvt. 1

In example 26 the use of *glissando* of only one whole step is shown. In movement 2, this will reoccur.

Example 26 Takashi Yoshimatsu, Fuzzy Bird Sonata, Mvt. 1, mm. 82–83

Movement 2 begins with swirling piano obbligato; marked largo, the movement is to be played freely. The opening statement has subdivisions of triplet sixteenth and quintuplet thirty-second to simulate an accelerando. The next statement of the opening has $\text{13/32}^{\text{nd}}$ and $\text{15/32}^{\text{nd}}$ note subdivisions with written direction “*accel.*” and “*rit*”, adding to the *rubato* feel. The grace notes used and the whole step *glissando* from G to A that ends the first three phrases are reminiscent of the grace notes performed on a
shakuhachi, a traditional Japanese flute. To contextualize these notes, one must have an understanding of traditional shakuhachi playing.

This is a system of combining half-holing (only partially covering the hole with the finger) with changes in embouchure in order to produce many different pitches from a single hole. Theoretically, there are three levels of highness (kari) and three of lowness (meri) for each fingering. These differences, however, do not represent Western half-step movements but more often very slight changes of a quartetone or less. [...] It is one of the characteristic qualities of the shakuhachi flute playing technique.²⁶

The imitation of the shakuhachi is one of the most obvious of the Japanese elements of sound used by Yoshimatsu. Grace notes and glissandi are therefore not necessarily meant to follow conventional melodic motion in half steps. In example 25, a piece of shakuhachi music written out in western notation is shown. There are obvious similarities between this music and what Yoshimatsu has written in the opening of movement 2, including the use of grace notes as neighbor tones and at the end of phrases.

At section A, Yoshimatsu writes a breath trill, viewable in example 28.

Example 28 Takashi Yoshimatsu, Fuzzy Bird Sonata, Mvt. 2, mm.1–7

---

27 Ibid, 160.
Putting an X through the note head notates this technique. This is slightly different than Marinescu’s choice of notation; in Bach Variations, the breath note is marked with only an X, no note head.

Saxophonists can use an effect called bisbigliando by adding keys to a fingering to create slight timbral changes. The way this is notated by Yoshimatsu is the manner displayed in example 29. The figure ends with a grace note gesture.

Example 29 Takashi Yoshimatsu, Fuzzy Bird Sonata, Mvt. 2

Yoshimatsu blends techniques by adding keys shakuhachi-like phrases. Movement 3, entitled Fly, bird, starts with a portamento whole step ascending motion and the instructions “different keys.” This is to achieve different timbres on the same note, in this case it is middle C-sharp. This is shown in example 30.

Example 30 Takashi Yoshimatsu, Fuzzy Bird Sonata, Mvt. 3, mm. 1–2
This figure repeats once more leading into section A, *presto rubato*. The grace notes and *glissandi* are shakuhachi-like elements. Both movement 2 and movement 3 are reminiscent of shakuhachi pieces. “Shakuhachi pieces vary in length from a few minutes to half an hour. In general, the music tends to follow a rondo-like form, that is, there is an alternation of one basic melodic idea with sections of new music.”

Yoshimatsu does not strictly obey such a structure, but there are instances where themes return more than once, usually with some modification. Section E is a repeat of section A and F is a repeat of B. The run that leads from B to C is used again, verbatim, to move from F to G, where Yoshimatsu marks a cadenza, shown in figure 29.

Example 31 Takashi Yoshimatsu, Fuzzy Bird Sonata, Mvt. 3, m. 45

The cadenza calls for “multiple notes” but does not specifically call for multiphonics. Performers must select material that exists in the music or is an extension of what exists including the use of the various extended techniques.

Of the last three sections, H and I are a mix of previously presented material, brought together in a final iteration before the conclusion. Section J is a coda made up of

---

28 Ibid, 161.
ascending trills in the saxophone part. Trills are a significant element in the music used extensively to create bird-like sounds. The phrase leads to the final note, an altissimo D to be played as loud as possible within the context of good tone.
Chapter Three

Each piece demands absolute control of the instrument at the extreme ends of the dynamic spectrum. To be played successfully, the compositional techniques used by contemporary composers must be interpreted by players who possess comparable skills as performers. Having completed an overview of the music on the recital, the next step is to realize these sounds through practice. While I did not practice the pieces in any order, for the purposes of organization I will address the instances of extended technique as they appear in order on the recital program.

Maslanka makes thorough use of the altissimo range and one must consider which fingering to use that will produce a smooth transition and appropriate tone. Some fingerings may be easier to move to and from, but have less resonance than others. In the opening of movement 1, he calls for altissimo G in measure 19 (figure 1). The factors that determine the appropriate altissimo fingerings for a given passage are the quality of the fingering, in terms of clarity and intonation, and the facility required to play the passage. Some altissimo fingerings are quite awkward; others are more difficult to play in tune. In the case of measure 19, we would normally opt for a high G fingering that gives the most clarity, because of the legato line and the fact that it is the highest note so far in the piece. However, moving from any high F-sharp fingering to the high G fingering with the most clarity is nowhere near as smooth as another option. I chose the smoother fingering, one that requires more care in tone and intonation, to keep the integrity of the legato line.
The process of achieving facility in the altissimo range begins with practicing playing overtones while fingering low B-flat, B, and C. For each fingering, the player must find the correct technique for their unique body and instrument combination to produce the overtones. The player must also have a solid foundation in tone production and intonation. "High tones should be attempted only by advanced saxophone players who have a well-developed embouchure and an accurate sense of pitch discrimination. The latter is of utmost importance, since tones in this register must be heard ahead of their sounding." Maslanka uses the altissimo range extensively and without regard to it being more difficult to play. Examples 1-3 and 30 demonstrate this.

Movement 2 contains the first appearance of feathered beams. One not only has to understand what they mean, but place them in a rhythmic context appropriate for where they appear. While one interpretation could increase expressiveness, the danger of overplaying the figure does exist. The melody requires complete dynamic control of the altissimo range. In measure 17 the anacrusis on a quarter note high B to altissimo G-sharp whole note that diminuendos from forte to piano, tied to another whole note that crescendos to mezzo forte in measure 20 (Figure 5). As with earlier altissimo sections, this must be played down an octave in the same manner the performer would play the written notes. There should be no difference in tone color between octaves and a player should have as much control of the altissimo as the lower octave. Patient observation of the body is required to ensure no unnecessary tension is happening and that the requisite energy is being used to support the airstream. There are other spots in movement 2 that have altissimo passages that can be worked out doing the same process.

---

29 Larry Teal 'The Art of Saxophone Playing' Summy Birchard Miami 1963, 98.
Movement 3 has very fast passage work in the altissimo plus sustained sections punctuated with ornamental flourishes, as shown in example 32. Even good fingerings must be practiced at slow speed until both finger dexterity and proper air-steam/vocal cavity shape are determined. The airstream and vocal cavity combination must be one that will allow for fast register shifts at different dynamics and smoothly transitions from one altissimo note to another based on a different fundamental. Long sections of sustained altissimo occur several times in this movement.

Example 32 David Maslanka, Sonata for Alto Saxophone and Piano, Mvt. 3, mm. 9–33

There are many instances where Maslanka has written a flurry of notes in the altissimo to be played quite fast. In order to play the fast runs, one has to be able to play the same thing an octave below, smoothly. The altissimo needs to be played just as
smoothly, therefore using the lower octave as a reference for phrasing and tone quality was part of my practice. One will have to experiment with shaping the vocal cavity, jaw placement forward or back on the reed, air speeds and thickness to discover how to prepare the body to control the sound. Careful selection of fingerings is needed for altissimo grace notes and the same goes for the altissimo trills section. “Fingering positions in this register only set up the acoustical possibility of producing the desired note, but will in no way guarantee it.” Different fingerings must be tried out in order to find out what works for the given player/mouthpiece/instrument combination, but the fingerings cannot produce the sound by themselves. Only proper embouchure and airstream can produce a tone on a saxophone, no matter where in the pitch range it is played.

In measure 142, Maslanka gives the instructions “choke the tone to a strangled and broken cry”, leaving the interpretation to the performer (example 7). To be able to skillfully allow a controlled altissimo note lose its focus and yet still project requires much experimentation. Fingering low C-sharp, while playing the note high G-sharp, which is the fifth overtone of C-sharp, gives the performer a considerable interval to work within to achieve the sound sought after. A sound described as “a strangled and broken cry” cannot reasonably resemble normal tone at all. Other directions that appear later, such as “overblown multiphonic of your choice: a tremendous squawk” from measure 178 (example 8), that contextualize the previous instruction.

Maslanka specifically calls for multiphonic in measure 178. Above measure 302 is an instruction “A wild braying – brassy, frightening, can be multiphonic screech.” The

30 Teal, 98.
Marinescu employs multiphonics in measure 24 as a way of continuing an increase of intensity preaced by a crescendo arriving at *fortissimo, pesante* in measure 21 and started by accents and upward pitch motion. This foreshadows the conclusion of the first section characterized, in measure 41, by a long run of increasing rhythmic speed, notated by the growing underbars and a large crescendo arriving at *fortissimo* as the run arrives at high C followed by a multiphonic to end it. In order to play the piece correctly, the performer needs to know exactly how the given passage should sound, especially in the closing of the piece. The last section of the piece is a slow fade-out. The instruction *morendo*, six measures from the end, describes what follows as dying away. It is a sequence of three motives that are similar in contour, but become less and less rhythmically complex, and lower in pitch. The final action is a breath instruction, no pitch; the performer is to blow air through the horn artfully (example 14). This technique gives the music a dynamic and aesthetic below *pianississimo* (ppp). This is where extended technique has become part of the essential expression of the music in a very simple way. Thoughtful experimentation is necessary to determine exactly what kind of breath sound the performer chooses.

Denisov writes fast passagework in the altissimo by measure 16. By measure 30, the saxophone part is entirely in the altissimo range, achieving E-flat in measure 33 as shown in example 33. Preparation for this playing requires that all fingerings have been tested for intonation and have been integrated into the player’s overall technique. Extensive practice with the overtone series is recommended. “Since the tones above the
normal register require a manipulation of the fundamental tone into the upper partials, preliminary exercises which point up the adaptability to the harmonic series should be studied first. The advent of extreme altissimo should have no effect on the tone quality or ease of motion in playing.

Example 33 Edison Denisov, *Sonate for Alto Saxophone and Cello*, Movt. 1, mm. 30–38

Likewise, instances of flutter tongue (example 16), *glissandi* (example 21) use of quartertones must all be prepared so that there is a seamless transition from straight tone to one with some kind of extended modifier. Movement 2 uses lots of quartertones to create atmospheric aesthetic; careful study of the score is required in order understand the way that consonance and dissonance function in this movement. Understanding and properly executing quartertones is an extended technique for the ears as much as anything. Denisov calls for specific multi-phonics, giving specific fingerings (Ex.19 and

31 Teal, 98.
Ex. 20). In performance, these fingerings sometimes cannot be obeyed strictly, as each combination of mouthpiece, instrument and player is unique, so will be the practice that achieves the stated goal of the score. Movement 2 also has the challenge of playing multiphonics, or split tones, at low volume with sensitive dynamic changes and with the instructions to remove a pitch from the sound over sustained durations of more than two measures. The challenge physically is to control the air and vocal cavity in such a way as to delicately introduce what are essentially harsh, dissonant sounds.

Trills are not an extended technique, but quartertone trills require experimentation to achieve facility, intonation and quality tone. The first quartertone trill appears in measure 57 of the first movement, shown in example 34.

Example 34 Edison Denisov, Sonate for Alto Saxophone and Cello, Movt. 1, m. 57

The challenge presented by this passage was not met with complete success. Further experimentation is required to achieve satisfactory results.

Denisov asks the performer to play split multiphonics at light dynamic. One must experiment with airspeed and mouth-cavity shapes a great deal in order to discover how to do this. One must also find fingerings that work if the suggested fingerings do not
produce the desired multiphonic on that given player, mouthpiece, instrument combination. In order to remove one of the notes in the multiphonic, additional experimentation is required. There is no way to verbalize the exact position of the mouth as every performer’s physiology is slightly different. Just as the fingerings presented are only suggestions, not final answers, there is no one right way to achieve the removal of one note from a multiphonic. Whatever mouth shape I create is different than another performer’s.

Denisov’s employment of quarter tones in various and sundry ways requires that a performer develop one’s intonation to an exceptional degree. The sensitivity required to play quarter tones correctly improves one’s intonation. This is especially true of quartetone glissandi, that require precise understanding of starting and ending pitch, and in the altissimo, where intervals are often heard less clearly and more difficult to control. For this performer, learning altissimo was a way to continue creating a sound on the entire range of the instrument as well as improving intonation and articulation, both of which are more difficult in the higher octaves.

Altissimo is one technique that all of the pieces on the program share. All pieces but the Yoshimatsu utilize multiphonics. But they each have their own vocabulary of extended techniques the each composer has selected to not enhance the pieces, but to include them in the fundamental expression of the given piece. Maslanka’s call for “choked broken cry” leave it to the performer to decide how best to express that sentiment, given the rather amazing and as yet unending range of expression that is increasingly available on the saxophone. Maslanka calls for great contrast in timbre, tempo, and overall feel. He uses extended techniques to emphasize these contrasts. While
the vast majority of trills are quite easy to play (with notable exceptions), trills in the altissimo are not, owing to each note being placed on overtone series from different fundamentals.

Yoshimatsu employs extensive altissimo, including trills, like Maslanka. The preparation for altissimo in this piece should be as with the Maslanka. Preparing the various glissandi is a matter of experimentation and taste. In the case of the harmonique gliss., the glissandi that occur before and after it should contextualize the sound achieved, but cannot become more important than the aim creating of bird-like sounds. Another musical moment that seeks to emulate birds, the slap tongue section in movement 1 requires that a performer learn not only to slap tongue, but to recover fast enough to repeat the articulation.

The technique is to lay the tongue flat on the reed prior to starting a note, and, after bringing the air pressure to the mouthpiece, smartly release the tongue in a downwards movement – the reed strike the mouthpiece hard, and the player stops the air pressure, thus creating a short pitched slapping sound.32

Integrated into the melodic line, the slap tongue is not optional; it creates a pecking sound, one of the many sounds Yoshimatsu uses in emulating birds.

Movement 2 shows the explicit intent to evoke Japanese music sensibilities. Grace notes in the rubato line like shakuhachi. Portamento slides that are first used in measure 2, breath trills first utilized in the first measure of A and the bisbigliando fingerings on A in 5th bar of A to get different timbres. It is important to understand and be able to play the difference between gliss. and chromatic glissando and portamento.

32 Roach, 91.
Also, the saxophone part often has fermatas over the consistent moving piano part, which creates ensemble difficulties. With these aspects, flexibility of tempo is more important than maintaining a strict rhythm. Pulsing a strict beat is not as important in this movement as in the outer movements. Yoshimatsu expects the performer to be free and flexible and play the ornaments in an improvisatory manner.”

Movement 3 contains Japanese musical sensibilities. One has the obligation to play grace notes in a similar fashion to a Japanese flute grace note. The cadenza instructions include a duration of “20 seconds to 1 minute, adlib free, trills, multiple notes, passages … etc.” The performer must determine what to include in the cadenza. Material from the third movement should be included, but additional material may be used. A performer has the option to interpret the instruction for “multiple notes” as an instruction for a multiphonic, but must place it within the context of the rest of the cadenza material.

Yoshimatsu uses the breath sound that Marinecu employs, but gives a pitch that designates a fingering. In performance, players often opt to actually use an actual pitch, rather than breath sound (reference recordings from Naxos). In movements 2 and 3 Yoshimatsu writes passages that are intended to evoke Japanese aesthetics, specifically those of the shakuhachi flute. Although this is not explicitly stated in the score, the intervals uses, along with the grace notes that ornament these passages (examples 28–30) are clearly evocative of the traditional shakuhachi flute.

---

CONCLUSION

While the programming considerations for a professional recital of concert music are usually honored in a student recital, there remains one factor that must also be included in the selection of pieces. This factor is the pedagogical importance of each piece within the context of student performer development. Each piece in this program uses a wide variety of extended techniques. These techniques are not embellishments of music that would remain essentially the same if they were removed. The extended techniques are used by the composers in such a way as to make them integral to the accurate reproduction of the music.

Given that extended techniques are an extension of a solid foundation in the basics of saxophone playing, it is assumed that a player who has had a program such as the one performed has already developed adequate technique. The challenge of employing extended techniques in this repertoire is to integrate them into the music so that there is no distinction between technique and extended technique within the context of performance so that the listener is focused on the musical impact, not the technical challenges.
Works Cited


Appendix

-Program-

Sonata ......................................................................................................................David Maslanka
Moderato
Very Expressive
Very Fast

-Intermission-

Bach Variations ............................................................................................................Liviu Marinescu
(b. 1970)

Sonate for Alto Saxophone and Cello...............................................................Edison Denisov
Allegro Risoluto
Tranquilo
Moderato

Fuzzy Bird Sonata....................................................................................................Takashi Yoshimatsu
Run, Bird
Sing, Bird
Fly, Bird