

ANALYSIS OF A RECITAL: A REPORT ON PIET SWERTS' *KLONOS* AND INGOLF
DAHL'S *CONCERTO FOR ALTO SAXOPHONE AND WIND ORCHESTRA*

by

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Abstract

Ingolf Dahl's *Concerto for Alto Saxophone and Wind Orchestra* is considered a master concert work in saxophone literature. The work was written for saxophone pioneer Sigurd Rascher who was active in commissioning new works for the instrument. Piet Swerts' *Klonos*, composed over 40 years after Dahl's *Concerto*, is a much newer composition. The work has gained national recognition as a popular competition piece and is a synthesis of new and old compositional styles. These two works strongly showcase the flexibility and virtuosity capable of the skilled saxophonist. This master's report, presented as extended program notes, includes biographical information about the composers, a historical and stylistic overview of the selected compositions, and a harmonic and formal analysis of the music with respect to performance considerations.

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CHAPTER 1 - Piet Swerts' *Klonos*

Piet Swerts

Piet Swerts was born on November 14, 1960 in Tongeren, Belgium and is internationally recognized as a successful composer, conductor, and pianist. Swerts' compositions are currently in high demand, as a majority of his works have been funded through commissions. His complete compositional output exceeds over 200 works for orchestra, solo instrument, chamber ensemble, voice, and piano.¹

During 1974 to 1989, Swerts studied at the Lemmens Institute, a music conservatory in Leuven, Belgium. While there, he studied piano under the instruction of Robert Groslot and received numerous prizes for his musical abilities. For example, he received the Prize Lemmens Tinel in both composition and piano performance with the title of great distinction. He was the first individual in the history of the university to receive both prizes simultaneously.²

Swerts is currently Professor of Composition, Piano, and Music Theory at the Lemmens Institute and has held this position since 1982. He has also served as conductor of the Ensemble for Contemporary Music since 1985. Swerts has toured as a guest performer and teacher at a variety of universities across the globe. These universities include, for example, the Polytechnic Institute in Castelo Branco, Portugal (2003), the Conservatory of Joensuu, Finland (2004), and the Conservatory of Barcelona, Spain (2005).³

One of Swerts' most popular works is a violin concerto titled *Zodiac*.⁴ This piece was written in 1992. The following year, Swerts received the Grand Prix for this composition in the International Queen Elisabeth Composition Competition. The term "Zodiac" refers to a Greek sign consisting of 12 figures. These figures are organized in a circular pattern and are based on the earth's annual orbit around the sun.⁵ The Zodiac is geometrically complex, and it is this

¹ Piet Swerts. *Piet Swerts*. (<http://www.pietswerts.be>)

² Ibid

³ Yves Knockhaert. "Piet Swerts." *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*. 2nd ed. Vol. 24. (New York: Macmillan, 2001), 781.

⁴ Ibid

⁵ J.A. Simpson and E.S.C. Weiner. *The Oxford English Dictionary*. (New York, NY: Oxford University Press 1989)

geometric quality that Swerts incorporates into his work. Similar to *Zodiac*, many of Swerts' compositions are constructed around a single germinal theme.⁶

Works for Saxophone

Swerts has written a variety of works for saxophone, including *Kotekan for Interlocking Saxophone and Strings*, *Klonos for Alto Saxophone and Piano*, and *Dance of Uzume for Alto Saxophone and Winds*. *Klonos* and *Kotekan* were written specifically for international music competitions. *Kotekan* was composed for the 4th International Adolph Sax Competition in November 2006. This competition took place in Dinant, Belgium, and *Kotekan* was specifically written for the competition's final round. It was premiered by Antonio Felipe Belijar, a virtuoso saxophonist from Madrid, Spain.

The term "kotekan" is a musical style that originated with tuned percussion ensembles, such as Balinese gamelan orchestras. In the kotekan style of music, there are two interlocking musical parts called the *polos* and the *sangsih*. The combination of these parts defines a musical phrase. In Swerts' *Kotekan*, the *polos* are written for saxophone and the *sangsih* is written for piano.

Kotekan was commissioned by the Adolph Sax International Association. It is a challenging work best studied and performed by the mature saxophonist. It consists of extensive technical passages, demanding ranges, and a wide variety of communication between the saxophone and accompaniment (as indicated by the title "for interlocking saxophone and strings").⁷ *Klonos* will be discussed beginning on page 11.

Compositional Style

Piet Swerts considers himself autodidactic in his compositional development.⁸ Autodidactic is defined in the *Oxford English Dictionary* as "self directed learning,"⁹ and Swerts

⁶ Piet Swerts. *Piet Swerts*. (<http://www.pietswerts.be>)

⁷ Piet Swerts. *Kotekan*. Zodiac Editions, 2006

⁸ Piet Swerts. *Piet Swerts*

⁹ J.A Simpson and E.S.C. Weiner. *The Oxford English Dictionary*. (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1989).

adheres to this definition by using independent research as the core of his compositional development. Many of Swerts' pieces share similarities in form, tonality, and melodic structure. As a result, his compositions are easily identifiable.¹⁰

Swerts considers form to be of utmost importance in his works.¹¹ While he is a 20th century composer who uses modern compositional techniques, he frequently follows traditional forms. For example, his *Clarinet Concerto* (1997) follows a traditional Sonata-Allegro form.¹² The work consists of a fast-slow-fast movement structure. Movement one adheres to the form of a classical concerto by following Exposition-Development-Recapitulation structure associated with Sonata-Allegro form.

The composer frequently uses imitation in his compositions. He often repeats melodic and harmonic motives in order to create a sense of musical unity. *Klonos* showcases Swerts' use of repetition and imitation which will be discussed in detail beginning on page 13.

Pan-chromaticism, defined as “Tonal ambiguity in harmony and melody through the use of chromatic movement and polyphony,”¹³ is employed by Swerts in much of his music. This technique creates the illusion of atonality, or “the absence of tonality,”¹⁴ while still maintaining a key center. Examples of pan-chromaticism can be seen in his saxophone solo *Kotekan*, as well as his *Sonata for Piano* (2008).

The first movement of *Kotekan* illustrates pan-chromaticism through a motive consisting of repeated triplet sixteenth-notes and fast chromatic runs. An example of this motive can be seen in measures 10 and 11 of this movement. (see Figure 1.1). These atonal patterns occur within a movement that is fundamentally tonal and lyrical, creating a pitch center that shifts in and out of stability. A primary motive during these sections is the minor second relationship found in these triplets. Accompanied by chromatic lines, a sense of exotic tonality often

¹⁰Swerts. *Piet Swerts*. (<http://www.pietswerts.be>)

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Jeroen Vanaker and Klaas Coulembier. *Piet Swerts*. (MATRIX, 2005, <http://www.matrix-new-music.be/en/composer/swerts-piet-1960>).

¹³John Dimond. *Theory of Music: Introduction to Late-Romantic chromaticism*. (2012).

¹⁴Don Michael Randel. *The New Harvard Dictionary of Music*. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986), 56.

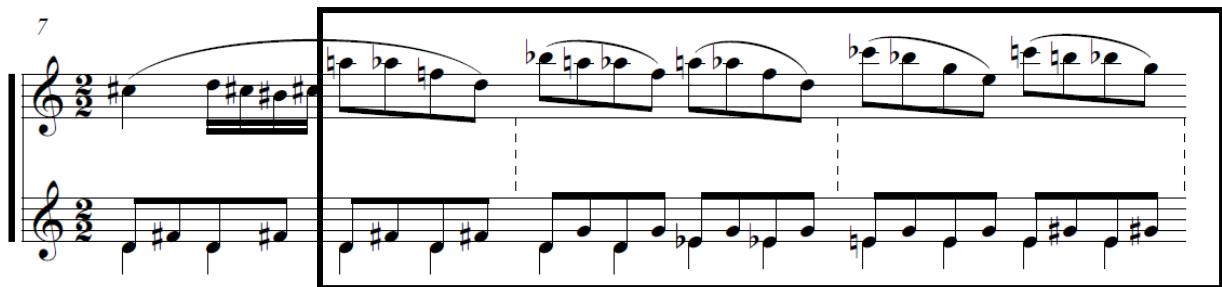
associated with Eastern music is present. The interlocking musical lines between the saxophone and piano also create a rich polyphonic texture, helping to reinforce pan-chromaticism.

Figure 1.1 – Pan-chromaticism in *Kotekan* (m. 10-11)



Swerts commonly utilizes pan-chromaticism to create a “rising” effect. This is produced through the gradual increase in musical pitch and is frequently accompanied by growing dynamics or an *accelerando*. Swerts’ *Sonata* for piano showcases this technique. (see Figure 1.2). In this example, the left hand and right hand work in tandem to create chromatic movement. The left hand consists of alternating pitches while the right hand consists of descending four-note groupings.

Figure 1.2 – Pan-chromaticism from *Sonata* for piano (m. 7-9)



The composer employs musical cells, defined as “small motives consisting of simple rhythmical gestures or pitch sets,” in his compositions.¹⁵ His pieces can often be traced back to several small cells that are developed throughout the work.¹⁶ An example of Swerts’ use of cells

¹⁵ Jeroen Vanaker and Klaas Coulembier. *Piet Swerts*.

¹⁶ *Ibid*

is demonstrated in *Symphony No. 2* (2000), arguably considered one of his most significant works consisting of 74 minutes of music. The music is constructed around one germinal cell. A discussion of Swerts' use of musical cells in *Klonos* will be addressed beginning on page 17.

Klonos

Klonos for Alto Saxophone and Piano was composed by Piet Swerts in 1993. It was his first composition written for solo saxophone and piano accompaniment.¹⁷ *Klonos* has been recorded on several professional CD's, including *Brilliance* by Duo Gaulin-Riverin,¹⁸ *Saxophone Caprices* by Koryun Asatryan,¹⁹ and *Memories of Dinant* by Otis Murphy.²⁰

Commissioned by the Foundation Dr Ir.Th. P. Tromp Music Competition for the Benelux in Eindhoven, Netherlands, *Klonos* served as a compulsory piece for the 1994 competition. The Tromp Music Competition is an international music competition and percussion festival that takes place biannually in Eindhoven, Netherlands. This competition was founded by Dr. Theo Philibert Tromp, a Dutch politician and businessman. It has since become part of the World Federation of International Music Competitions and has gained status as a competition of great prestige.

The Greek term “klonos” refers to an intense muscle spasm or contraction. Swerts associates this with the cripple-like motion saxophone players make when performing a challenging technical passage.²¹ In the album insert of *Memories of Dinant*, Otis Murphy includes a quote from Swerts describing the significance of the title of *Klonos*:

*Klonos (1993), a Greek word, refers – says Swerts – to “a cramp-like contraction of the muscles, associated with the heavy movements that some saxophonists make during the fire of playing (for example, think about free jazz)...The work is... a bravura-like fantasy with a more subtle, yet intense middle section. Klonos finishes with a wild, even more virtuosic reprise. For the gifted saxophonist, it is quite a ride.”*²²

¹⁷ Jeroen Vanacker and Klaas Coulembier. *Piet swerts*.

¹⁸ Mattieu Gaulin and Jacynthe Riverin. *Brilliance*. (Analekta 2011).

¹⁹ Koryun Asatryan. *Saxophone Caprices*. (Hanssler Classic, 2005).

²⁰ Otis Murphy. *Memories of Dinant*. (RIAX, 1999).

²¹ Ryan Douglas Muncy. *Senior Saxophone Recital: An Honors Thesis*. (Ball State University, 2002), 19.

²² Otis Murphy *Memories of Dinant*.

Form and Tonality

Klonos follows a traditional ternary form (A - B - A' ending with a 35 measure coda; see Table 1.1). This form divides the piece into “movements” that seamlessly transition from the first movement (A section) to a lyrical second movement (B section) with a return of the music from the first movement (A' section in addition to a 35 measure coda).

Table 1.1 – Formal Structure of *Klonos*

Sections (measures)	Subsections (measures)
A (m. 1-90)	a (m. 1-37)
	b (m. 38-69)
	c (m. 70- 90)
B (m. 91-112)	d (m. 91-101)
	e (m. 102-112)
A' (m. 113-193)	a' (m. 113-141)
	b' (m. 142-177)
	c' (m. 178-193)
Coda (m. 194-229)	

Imitation plays an important role in *Klonos*. When analyzing the two fast sections of this piece (sections A and A'), the similarities in melody and harmony are apparent. Both sections open with an identical accompaniment. The opening saxophone melody of the A section returns in the A' section, but includes numerous embellishments and altered rhythms. For example, in measure 6 the melody begins with two thirty-second notes, moving from a concert B-flat to C. The imitated version of this figure appears in measure 116. In this measure, the original melody is transformed into a dramatic ascending line beginning on a concert E-flat. After this gesture, the saxophone solo continues with melodic and rhythmic variation (see Figure 1.3). The altered melody consists of four thirty-second notes that replace triplet sixteenth notes. This rhythmically active line leads to a highly virtuosic and technically driven coda.

Figure 1.3 – The original melody (m. 1-13 “top”) and the imitated melody (m. 113-122 “bottom”)

The image displays two systems of musical notation. The top system, labeled 'top', shows measures 1 through 13. It begins with a treble clef and a 3/8 time signature. The melody consists of several measures with rests, followed by a series of eighth notes and triplets. A dynamic marking of *f* (forte) is present. The bottom system, labeled 'bottom', shows measures 113 through 122. It also starts with a treble clef and a 3/8 time signature. The melody is highly rhythmic, featuring many eighth notes and triplets. A dynamic marking of *f* is also present here. The notation includes various accidentals and articulation marks.

Swerts uses pan-chromaticism extensively throughout *Klonos*. For example, measures 30-35 of the solo line consist exclusively of chromatic movement (see Figure 1.4). The composer’s implementation of this techniques creates an ambiguous tonal center.

Figure 1.4 – Extensive use of chromaticism in the solo line (m. 30-35)

The image shows a close-up of musical notation for measures 30 through 35. Measure 30 is circled and has the word 'pizzicato' written above it. The notation is characterized by a high density of accidentals (sharps and flats) and slurs, indicating extensive chromatic movement. There are also some triplets and dynamic markings like *f*. Measure 33 is also circled. The overall texture is dense and complex.

The composer continues to “weaken” tonality by incorporating a variety of scale and arpeggio patterns. For example, Swerts uses an octatonic scale in the A and A’ sections of the piece (e.g., measures 67-69). An octatonic scale, also described as a diminished scale, is a scale pattern consisting of alternating minor second and major second intervals. Only three octatonic scales exist, and they are often found in modern and fundamentally atonal compositions.²³ Beginning in measure 67, the solo line descends as part of an octatonic scale. This pattern is then transferred to the piano in measure 68 and continues to descend until measure 70 (see Figure 1.5). Another pattern found in *Klonos* is the composers’ use of augmented chords in the B section (e.g., measures 93-101). Swerts use of chromatic “goal tones” results in a “shifting” sense of tonality throughout the work.

Figure 1.5 – Octatonic lines being passed from the solo line (m. 67) to the piano (m. 68-69)

The image displays a musical score for measures 67, 68, and 69. Measure 67 features a solo line in the treble clef, marked with a 3/8 time signature and a key signature of one flat. The solo line plays an octatonic scale descending from G4 to G3. This scale is then transferred to the piano in measures 68 and 69. In measure 68, the right hand of the piano plays the octatonic scale descending, while the left hand plays a series of chords. In measure 69, the right hand continues the octatonic scale descending, and the left hand plays a series of chords. Three boxes highlight the octatonic lines in measures 67, 68, and 69, each labeled '8:6'.

Klonos begins with A as a tonal pitch goal. This is confirmed through the insistent repetition of octave A’s in the left hand of the piano. The tonality quickly loses stability as a result of rising chromatic gestures in the right hand of the piano (see Figure 1.6). Ascending chromatic runs are one of the primary forms of harmonic and melodic movement throughout this piece, and several examples will be identified throughout this analysis.

²³ Don Michael Randel. *The New Harvard Dictionary of Music*, 729.

Figure 1.6 – Octave A’s in the left hand opposed to chromatic motion in the right hand (m. 1-6)



Measure 93 marks the beginning of the B section of *Klonos*. This section opens with an F augmented chord outlined in eighth notes by the right hand, which is set in opposition to an E augmented chord outlined in dotted eighth notes in the left hand. The half-step relationship between these chords combined with their juxtaposed rhythms builds alternating half-step motion, outlining a chromatic scale. This creates an ambiguous tonal center until the soloist enters with a concert E, providing a sense of tonality based around concert E (see Figure 1.7). Beginning in measure 98, the tonality shifts to the tonal goal of B-flat as the right hand outlines an augmented B-flat triad, and the left hand outlines a B Major triad. Similar to the previous statement, the solo line enters, establishing a tonal center of concert B-flat.

Figure 1.7 – Outlined augmented chords and an establishment of the key by the soloist’s entrance, playing a written C# “concert E” (m. 93-95)



The accompaniment and solo line begin a chromatic climb in measure 102. These chromatic lines continue to build intensity as they are joined by a gradual crescendo and accelerando. The culmination of musical tension is finally released at the climax of this section in measure 109 ending on a concert B. Immediately following, the tonality descends chromatically in measure 110 before settling on a concert A in measure 112. This transition prepares the tonality for the return of the opening theme.

The A' section ("movement three") begins in measure 113. With the exception of minor embellishments, this section mirrors the A section of the piece. The soloist enters at the end of measure 116 and the music is a repetition of the "first movement" through measure 141.

In measure 142, a new motive is introduced, providing a contrast from the technically active parts of the fast sections (see Figure 1.8). Musical tension is created in the piano through the constant repetition of sixteenth notes, creating a strong sense of rhythmic pulse. The solo line compliments the sixteenth notes with alternating minor second intervals, adding an accented emphasis to select sixteenth notes. For example, in measure 142, the solo line emphasizes the 1st and 6th sixteenth notes, and emphasizes the 2nd and 5th sixteenth notes in measure 143.

Figure 1.8 – The rhythmic motive present during the A' section and coda (m. 142-143)



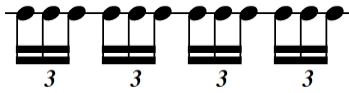



The motive from Figure 8 appears in the A' section, but is most prevalent during the coda. In the coda, the motive is consistently repeated over 20 measures of music (m. 194-214). During this section, the motive ascends chromatically in each measure until reaching a dramatic octatonic passage in measure 215. The line begins in the low register of the saxophone in measure 216 before chromatically ascending in pitch. Additionally, the piano joins the

chromatic movement, creating a sense of musical intensity both through range and dynamics to the end of the piece.

Musical cells

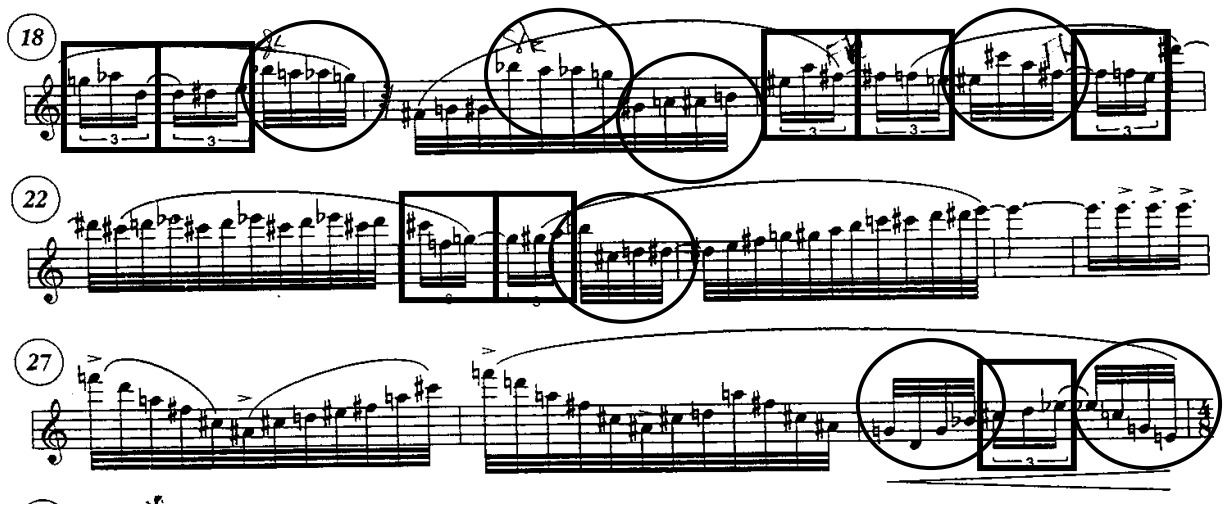
The rhythmic structure of *Klonos* is built on four separate musical cells. Cells are utilized in a variety of ways throughout this piece and produce a range of different musical effects. For the purpose of this report, all cells will be referred to by their assigned cell number (see Table 1.2).

Table 1.2 – Musical cells present in *Klonos* in order of occurrence

Cell #	Example	Description
1		<p>Skeletal rhythmic structure of the A and A' sections</p> <p>Often used together in an alternating fashion</p>
2		<p>Duple vs. triple rhythm adds a “crippled” feel to the melody</p>
3		<p>Both are used in a repeated fashion</p>
4		<p>Both build musical tension, and are used during climactic points in the A and A' sections</p>

The two most common cells in this piece are often used jointly. Cell 1 consists of three consecutive sixteenth-note triplets and Cell 2 consists of four consecutive thirty-second notes. These cells are often grouped together in an alternating fashion, creating a rhythmic “swing” in the music. This can be associated with the “muscle spasm” or “crippled” theme associated with this piece (see Figure 1.9).

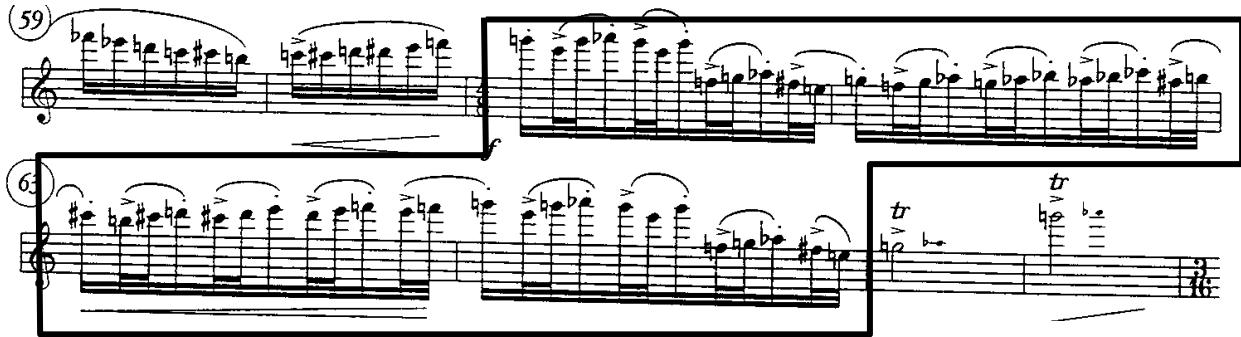
Figure 1.9 – Cell 1 “squares” and Cell 2 “circles” used in an alternating fashion (m. 18-29)



The two other cells in the outer sections of *Klonos* are used in similar ways. The first of these cells, Cell 3, consists of a sixteenth note followed by two thirty-second notes. Cell 4 is a mirror image of Cell 3, consisting of two thirty-second notes followed by a sixteenth note.

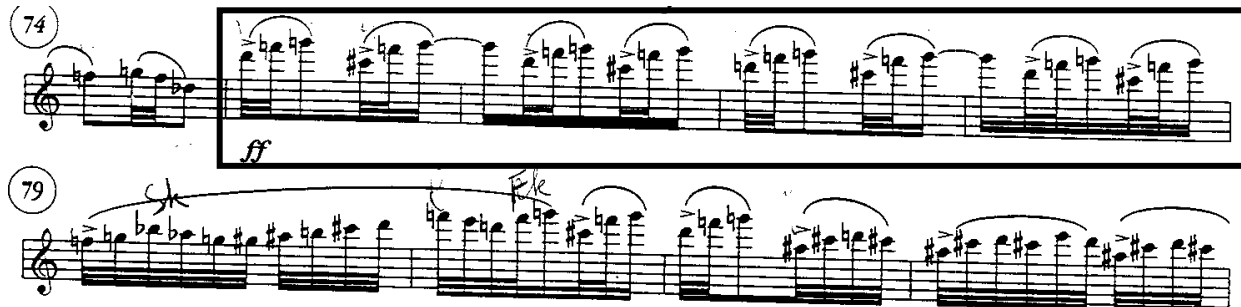
Cell 3 is first presented in measure 61. It opens in the altissimo register of the saxophone before being repeated an octave lower. Cell 3 is repeated 15 additional times, resulting in an ascending chromatic climb back to an an altissimo written G-natural (see Figure 1.10).

Figure 1.10 – Repetition and chromatic climb of Cell 3 (m. 61-64)



Cell 4 first appears in measure 75. This cell is repeated in a similar fashion to Cell 3 in Figure 1.10, but stays in the same range instead of ascending or descending in pitch. The insistent repetition of Cell 4 in the saxophone line is combined with forceful articulations at the beginning of each gesture, creating a strong sense of musical climax in the music (see Figure 1.11).

Figure 1.11 – Occurrence of Cell 4 (m. 75-78)



While Cell 3 and Cell 4 are considered independent musical cells for the purpose of this analysis, an argument can be made that they are both based on Cell 2 from the outer sections. An example of this is found in the A and A' sections of the piece. The chromatic climb of Cell 3 shown in Figure 1.10 is repeated in the A' section during measures 168-171 (see Figure 1.12). Beginning in measure 170, the original motive transforms from a repetition of Cell 3 to a repetition of Cell 2, demonstrating that the cells can replace each other and implying that Cell 3

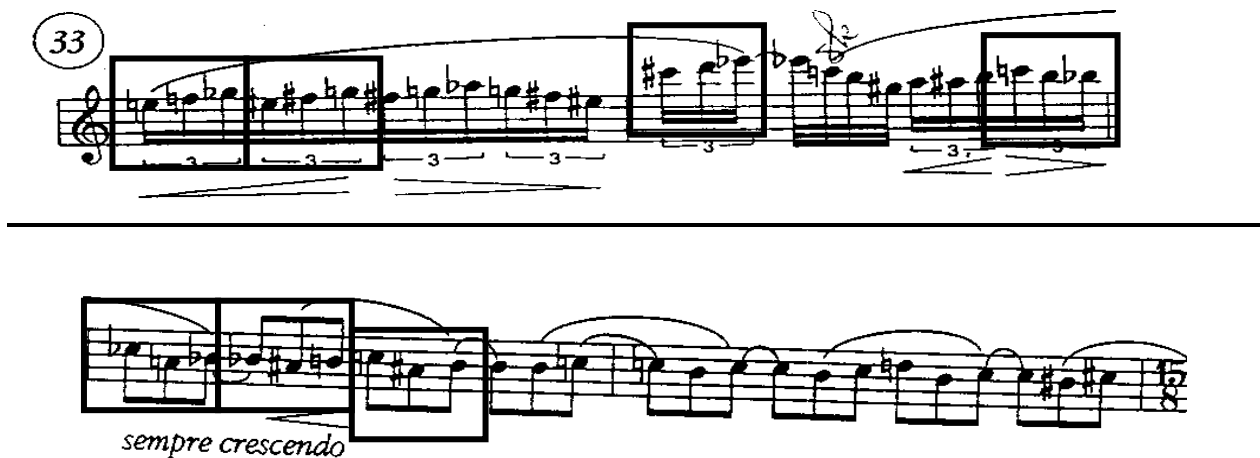
and Cell 4 can be simplified versions of Cell 2. While this suggests that Cell 3 and Cell 4 are greatly related to Cell 2, the rhythmic integrity created by alternating sixteenth and thirty-second notes are reserved for Cells 3 and 4 only.

Figure 1.12 – Replacement of Cell 3 with Cell 2 (m. 168 - 170)



During the B section of *Klonos* beginning in measure 93, the meter shifts to 12/8 creating a steady triplet pulse. The soloist utilizes this triplet feel by playing consecutive eighth notes from measures 102-109. The resulting triplet feel can arguably be considered an augmentation of Cell 1 found in the outer sections of the piece (see Figure 1.13).

Figure 1.13 – The use of Cell 1 in the A section (m. 33-34 “top”) and B section (m. 106-107 “bottom”) of *Klonos*



The B section provides a dramatic change in both tempo and style from the more technically active outer sections. The occurrence of Cell 1 in this section helps “unify” it with the two outer sections both rhythmically and tonally. This effectively illustrates how musical cells can “evolve” throughout different sections of a composition.

CHAPTER 2 - Ingolf Dahl's *Concerto for Alto Saxophone and Wind Orchestra*

Ingolf Dahl

Ingolf Dahl was born in Hamburg, Germany on June 9, 1912. Although he is of Swedish and German backgrounds, Dahl is widely considered an American composer due to his musical success following his immigration to the United States.²⁴ Several of his works have since become popular repertoire in wind band literature. These works include his *Concerto for Alto Saxophone and Wind Orchestra* as well as *Sinfonietta* for wind ensemble.

Dahl began his studies in composition at the Hochschule für Musik Köln in Köln, Germany in 1931. While there, he studied composition under Professor Phillip Jarnach. Jarnach was one of the leading composers of modern music during this time, as well as an accomplished pianist and conductor.²⁵

The Nazi party grew in power and influence during the 1930's. Dahl, as a member of the Jewish community, fled the Nazi regime in 1933 and moved to Switzerland.²⁶ Soon after, Dahl continued his studies at the University of Zurich. While studying in Zurich, Dahl worked as a conducting intern at the Zurich Opera House. He showed great talent for conducting and throughout the next six years of employment, assumed the title of Assistant Conductor.

In 1939, the increasing threat of the Nazi regime forced Dahl to immigrate to the United States. After his arrival, he changed his name from Walter Ingolf Marcus to Ingolf Dahl and settled in Los Angeles, California. Dahl consistently claimed to have immigrated to America a year earlier than he did and identified himself as being of Swedish background.²⁷

During the 1930's, southern California was home to a large number of highly regarded composers, including Igor Stravinsky, Arnold Schoenberg, and Darius Milhaud. The presence of these important composers transformed southern California into a musical hub. Dahl's relocation to Los Angeles influenced his future success as it offered him valuable opportunities

²⁴ Christopher Rettie. *A Performers and Conductors Analysis of Ingolf Dahl's Concerto for Alto Saxophone and Wind Orchestra*. (D.M.A. Diss. Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College, 2006), 3.

²⁵ Ibid

²⁶ James Berdahl. *Ingolf Dahl: His Life and Works*. (Phd. Diss. University of Miami, 1975), 14.

²⁷ Ibid

to network and collaborate with these famous musicians. As a result of these connections, he quickly developed a successful musical career as both a pianist and composer. Dahl joined the faculty at the University of Southern California in 1945 as Professor of Composition and held this position until his death in 1970.

Two of Dahl's compositions, *Concerto for Alto Saxophone and Wind Orchestra* and *Sinfonietta*, are considered his most successful works for wind band. These compositions are frequently performed by both professional and collegiate-level ensembles. They have both been described in Dr. Jay Gilbert's publication, *An Evaluation of Compositions for Wind-Band According to Specific Criteria of Serious Artistic Merit: A Replication and Update*, as being wind band literature consisting of "serious artistic merit."²⁸ Serious artistic merit refers to a list of criteria identified by 20 university band directors. The criteria, consisting of ten basic categories, are used to determine the most masterfully composed works in wind band literature.²⁹

Sinfonietta for concert band was commissioned by the western and northwest divisions of the College Band Directors National Association. It was premiered in 1961 by the University of Southern California Band in Los Angeles. The work effectively utilizes all the strengths of the wind ensemble. For example, it includes strong fanfares from the brass sections, often played from backstage, accompanied by sweeping melodic lines in the woodwinds.

The *Concerto for Alto Saxophone and Wind Orchestra* (1948/49) is a strong example of the peak of Dahl's compositional artistry. Stravinsky himself described this *Concerto* as being one of the finest works he had ever heard.³⁰ It has since become one of the core concertos in classical saxophone repertoire.

²⁸ Jay Warren Gilbert. *An Evaluation of Compositions for Wind-Band According to Specific Criteria of Serious Artistic Merit: A Replication and Update*. (D.M. Diss., Northwestern University, 1993), 151.

²⁹Ibid

³⁰Christopher Scott Rettie. *A Performers and Conductors Analysis of Ingolf Dahl's Concerto for Alto Saxophone and Wind Orchestra*, 15.

Concerto for Alto Saxophone and Wind Orchestra

Ingolf Dahl's *Concerto for Alto Saxophone and Wind Orchestra* was composed in 1948 for saxophonist Sigurd Rascher. Rascher was born in Germany in 1907 and is considered by many to be one of the greatest saxophonists of his time. While he was primarily recognized as an active performer, he was also a successful educator. His international teaching career included positions at the Royal Danish Conservatory in Copenhagen, and the conservatory in Malmo, Sweden. In the United States, he taught at the Manhattan School of Music, the University of Michigan, and the Eastman School of Music.³¹

During the 1930's, Rascher's concert tours occupied much of his time and attention. His American debut occurred in 1939 with the Boston Symphony Orchestra. He has since appeared as a guest performer with the New York Philharmonic Orchestra, the Philadelphia Orchestra, the Cleveland Orchestra, and the National Symphony Orchestra. Rascher played a significant role in the development of saxophone repertoire as he commissioned numerous concert works for the instrument. These commissions include works by composers such as Alexander Glazounov, Paul Hindemith, Darius Milhaud, and Lars-Eric Larsson.

Rascher was a strong advocate for the saxophone as a serious classical instrument, capable of fluid technique and a rich, beautiful tone. He also promoted extending the range of the saxophone, further showcasing its virtuosic potential. As a result, many of the works written for him include optional altissimo register passages.³² This technique has since become common in the saxophone works of many composers. One well-known example can be seen in Jacques Ibert's *Concertino da Camera*. For instance, the rising scale pattern in measure 49 can be presented an octave above where notated. This optional high-tone passage reaches an altissimo A at its peak (see Figure 2.1).

³¹ Robert Haley. *Sigurd Rascher Biography*. (2010, [www.http://www.classicsax.com/index.php/adolphe-sax-institute/50-sigurd-rascher-biography](http://www.classicsax.com/index.php/adolphe-sax-institute/50-sigurd-rascher-biography)).

³² Christopher Scott Rettie. *A Performers and Conductors Analysis of Ingolf Dahl's Concerto for Alto Saxophone and Wind Orchestra*, 15.

Figure 2.1 – Example of the optional 8va “octave higher” from *Concertino da Camera* by Jacques Ibert (m. 46-50)



Dahl’s *Concerto for Alto Saxophone and Wind Orchestra* was initially scheduled to be premiered at the University of Michigan under the direction of William Revelli. The premiere was cancelled due to an unfinished score.³³ Additionally, it was postponed a second time prior to the premiere by Sigurd Rascher on May 17th, 1949 at the University of Illinois.

The composer’s compositional process often involved frequent revisions. For example, the *Concerto for Alto Saxophone and Wind Orchestra* included a total of three revisions subsequent to the premiered version. The original version premiered by Rascher in 1949 was approximately 28 minutes in length.³⁴ This version is considerably different from the 1951 version most frequently performed today. The current version of Dahl’s *Concerto for Alto Saxophone and Wind Orchestra* is the 2nd revision and is timed at approximately 20 minutes in length. There is a difference of eight minutes in length when compared to the original score. The changes in these versions include eliminations of entire sections, added optional solo passages, and reductions to the number of musicians needed in order to present the work.

While significant revisions may lead one to believe that Dahl was dissatisfied with his *Concerto*, there are many reasons why Dahl might have made revisions on this successful composition. For example, the revisions make the *Concerto* more technically accessible to a larger number of saxophonists. Sigurd Rascher is considered a virtuosic saxophonist who promoted the saxophone’s technical and tonal extremes. Dahl’s indication of the traditional

³³Christopher Scott Rettie. *A Performers and Conductors Analysis of Ingolf Dahl’s Concerto for Alto Saxophone and Wind Orchestra*, 15.

³⁴ *Ibid*

range of the saxophone for the optional altissimo passages further promoted the performance of this work and the composer's music in general.³⁵

Dahl's *Concerto for Alto Saxophone and Wind Orchestra* was originally scored for full concert band. In 1953, he changed the instrumentation to that of the wind section of a symphony orchestra. This decision presented several advantages to performing the piece. For instance, this change allows for the *Concerto* to be programmed as part of an orchestra concert or wind band concert.

Although Dahl considered his revised version of the *Concerto* a significant improvement over the original, Rascher continued to perform the first edition of the *Concerto* on a regular basis. Dahl frequently wrote to Rascher, attempting to persuade him to perform the revised version. While Rascher showcased his composition around the country, Dahl felt the version being showcased was an inferior version to his revised edition.³⁶ The revised edition has since become the familiar version performed today.

³⁵ Christopher Scott Rettie. *A Performers and Conductors Analysis of Ingolf Dahl's Concerto for Alto Saxophone and Wind Orchestra*, 17.

³⁶ Ibid

Movement I: Recitative

Movement I of Dahl's saxophone concerto is titled *Recitative*. This movement opens with the statement of the A section presented by the accompaniment. The A section consists of a repeated dotted eighth note - sixteenth note rhythmic motive preceded by a quarter note (see Figure 2.2). This motive is used in a variety of ways throughout the entirety of the piece, and is expanded further throughout the second and third movements.

Figure 2.2 – Motive present in the A sections (m. 1-2)

The image shows a musical score for saxophone and piano. The top staff is for the saxophone, marked 'phone cert (ch)*'. The bottom two staves are for the piano, marked 'no'. The tempo is 'MAESTOSO (♩ = 56 - 58) MOLTO TENUTO'. The key signature is G minor (two flats). The score shows the first two measures of the A section. A rhythmic motive is highlighted with a black box: a quarter note followed by a dotted eighth note and a sixteenth note. This motive is repeated in the piano accompaniment. The saxophone part begins with a quarter rest, followed by a dotted eighth note and a sixteenth note. The piano accompaniment features a series of chords with a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes and sixteenth notes. The score includes dynamic markings like 'ff' and 'p'.

“Recitative” is defined in the *New Harvard Dictionary of Music* as “a type of vocal writing, normally for a single voice, with the intent of mimicking dramatic speech in song.”³⁷ Dahl imitates this style by creating distinct musical dialogue throughout the movement. For example, his use of “call and response” between the soloist and accompaniment allows for flexibility with rhythm and phrasing. This creates a conversational quality to the music. An example of this interaction may be viewed in the introduction of the movement. The accompaniment establishes the key of G-minor while building in rhythmic and dynamic strength. The opening statement ends with a dramatic silence in measure 8, preparing the solo line for its entrance. The accompaniment’s role then immediately shifts to that of an embellishing response

³⁷ Randel, Don Michael. *The New Harvard Dictionary of Music*, 682.

to the soloist. This produces a very thin texture in the accompaniment, allowing the soloist great freedom with the pacing of the melodic line. (see Figure 2.3)

Figure 2.3 – Accompaniment during the recitative section (m. 9-14)

The musical score for piano accompaniment during the recitative section (measures 9-14) is presented in two systems. The top system shows measures 9-14, with the vocal line in the upper staff and piano accompaniment in the lower two staves. The piano accompaniment is characterized by a thin texture, with the right hand playing chords and the left hand playing a simple bass line. Two sections of the piano accompaniment are highlighted with black boxes: the first box covers measures 9-10, showing a high F-sharp in the right hand and a low bass line in the left hand; the second box covers measures 11-12, showing a piano (*p*) dynamic marking and a similar texture. The score includes performance instructions: *sempre liberamente cantabile, ed un poco rubato* and *dim. sempre*. A section marker 'A' is placed above measure 11.

An important consideration in the performance of this movement is the use of vibrato. While vibrato may be used to color the more “singing” moments of the saxophone part, such as the high F-sharp sustained in the opening measures of the B section (measures 9-10), there are many examples in this music where the absence of vibrato is effective. An example may be viewed in measure 17 titled *Declamando* (see Figure 2.4). This section is to be performed in a declamatory fashion or in the style of a rehearsed speech. Performing this section with minimal vibrato enhances the soft dynamic markings indicated. Furthermore, the use of vibrato in climactic passages creates meaningful color contrast.

Figure 2.4 – Beginning of the *Declamando* section in Movement I (m. 16-21)

Measure 45 signifies the beginning of section C. This section is the climax of the movement, consisting of aggressive articulations in ascending, scalar patterns accompanied by a strong rhythmic ostinato in the winds. The music of this section may be characterized as march or fanfare-like in style. The composer's use of the low register of the saxophone at a forte volume creates a powerful sonority when compared to the music of measures 16-21. Both the solo part and accompaniment ascend in range. Dahl indicates an optional altissimo passage (altissimo A arrival) in the saxophone part.

Measures 53-59 mark the beginning of section D, and provide another example of musical exchange between the soloist and the accompaniment in a distinct "call and response" style. The musical conversation between the accompaniment and the solo part begins in measure 53. Dahl preserves the intensity created in the previous section by maintaining a fortissimo dynamic level. In measure 60, the opening rhythmic motive of the A section is presented one final time. Unlike the beginning, however, the character of the music is more subdued in nature and the wind orchestration is very thin in texture.

Movement II: Passacaglia

Movement one transitions “attacca” into movement two, titled *Passacaglia*. A passacaglia is a series of variations around an ostinato, or musical phrase or motive.³⁸ This passacaglia’s main theme is based around the tonal center of G-major. A quarter note ostinato presented in the left hand of the piano beginning in measures 1- 9 represents the passacaglia theme (see Figure 2.5). The passacaglia theme transitions through the tonal centers of G-major → D-major → A-major → E-major in a circle of fifths progression prior to returning to G-major for the final and fifth statement (see Table 2.1)

Figure 2.5 – The first statement of the *Passacaglia* theme in G-Major (m. 1-9)

The musical score for the first statement of the *Passacaglia* theme in G-Major (measures 1-9) is presented in three systems. The first system shows the beginning in G major, with a quarter-note ostinato in the left hand starting at *p* and the right hand playing a melodic line with a triplet and a trill, marked *mf cantabile*. The second system shows the progression to D major, with the left hand ostinato continuing and the right hand melodic line, marked *pp* and *sempre cantabile*. The third system shows the progression to A major, with the left hand ostinato continuing and the right hand melodic line, marked *pp espr. dolcissimo*. The ostinato in the left hand is highlighted with a black box in each system.

³⁸ Randel, Don Michael. *The New Harvard Dictionary of Music*, 611.

Table 2.1 – Locations and key centers of the *Passacaglia* theme in Movement II

Passacaglia Theme	Measures	Key
Theme I	1-9	G-major
Theme II	12-19	D-major
Theme III	21-26	A-major
Theme IV	40-53	E-major
Theme V	61-74	G-major

These statements are linked by musical transitions used to move from one statement to the next. The first transition, appearing in measures 10-11, consists of an unaccompanied solo line. This transition outlines a G-major triad prior to arriving on an F sharp in measure 12 in anticipation of D-major for the next section. The second transition, found in measure 20, consists of a single measure in which the soloist and accompaniment outline an A-major triad, preparing the harmony for the third theme in A-major.

The third transition occurs in measures 27-39. This transition is longer than the two preceding transitions by approximately 10 measures. This longer transition allows the music time to build to a climactic arrival in E-major at measure 40. The final transition to the return of the passacaglia theme in its original key occurs in measures 54-60. The call and response between soloist and accompaniment produces a musical “dialogue” in a similar style to the B section of Movement I.

The opening rhythmic motive of movement one returns in variation in movement two. The sixteenth note - dotted eighth note pattern becomes a thirty second note pattern (see Figure 2.6). This motive is reintroduced in measure 21. The rhythmic integrity of this motive is fundamental to the musical tension that continues to build both in terms of range and dynamics leading to the arrival of measure 40.

Figure 2.6 – The return of the opening motive in movement I (m. 21-24)

The musical score for Figure 2.6 consists of two systems of music. The first system (measures 21-24) is marked with a 'G' in a box at the beginning. It features a piano accompaniment with triplets and a saxophone part. The saxophone part includes the instruction *p espr* and has four passages highlighted with black boxes. The second system (measures 25-28) continues the piano accompaniment with triplets and includes the instruction *cresc. poco a poco*. The saxophone part in this system includes the instruction *molt. cresc. (senza accel.)* and has two passages highlighted with black boxes. The score is in 2/4 time and features a variety of dynamics and articulations.

There are several optional altissimo passages to be considered in movement two. While employing the altissimo register of the saxophone can bring a greater level of tonal virtuosity to the music, one must consider the musicality of implementing the extended register of the instrument. Many of the passages are indicated to be performed at very soft dynamic levels. One example may be viewed in measures 13-14 (see Figure 2.7). The “brighter” color associated with the altissimo register could be viewed as too overpowering against the more reserved character of the accompaniment.

Figure 2.7 – First optional passage in movement II (m. 13-14)

The musical score for Figure 2.7 consists of three staves. The top staff is a single melodic line with a box labeled 'F' at the beginning. It features a long, sweeping line with a fermata over the final measure, marked with a dynamic of *p* and the word *ossia*. The middle staff is a treble clef staff containing a series of chords, with a dynamic of *p* and the instruction *mf molto espr.* below it. The bottom staff is a bass clef staff with a series of chords and some melodic fragments, also marked with a dynamic of *p*. The music is in a key with one sharp (F#) and a 3/4 time signature.

The climax of measure 40, however, is a logical section to employ the use of the altissimo register (see Figure 2.8). The accompaniment is marked fortissimo and to be played “with force.” Additionally, the use of the extended range of the saxophone creates a brilliant color necessary at such a climactic moment in the music.

Figure 2.8 – The forth statement of the *Passacaglia* theme/optional solo line (m. 39-42)

The musical score for Figure 2.8 is divided into two systems. The first system has a box labeled 'I' above it. The top staff is a single melodic line marked *Largamente* and *ff*. The middle staff is a treble clef staff with a dynamic of *ff* and the instruction *con forza*. The bottom staff is a bass clef staff with a dynamic of *ff* and the instruction *molto cresc.*. The music is in a key with one sharp (F#) and a 3/4 time signature. The second system continues the melodic line in the top staff and the accompaniment in the middle and bottom staves, with a dynamic of *fff* in the bottom staff. The music is in a key with one sharp (F#) and a 3/4 time signature.

Movement III: Rondo alla Marcia

The third movement of Dahl's *Concerto* is in rondo form and incorporates a style that is "march-like" in character. While the first two movements of this concerto are consistently based around the key of G (major and minor, respectively), the final movement is based in the key of E flat-major. The technical virtuosity of the third movement, including the optional cadenza that incorporates the altissimo register, showcases the dynamic technical and tonal possibilities of the saxophone.

Rondo form is defined as "a structure consisting of a series of sections, the first of which recurs, normally in the home key, between subsidiary sections before returning finally to conclude, or round off, the composition (ABAC ... A)."³⁹ Movement three begins with a 26 measure introduction followed by an A-B-A'-C-A structure and coda. The movement ends with a recollection of the opening gesture initially presented in the saxophone part during the first movement (see Figure 2.9). This "musical" quote assists in unifying the first movement with the last movement.

Figure 2.9 – Quoting the opening statement of movement I (m. 359-363)

The image shows a musical score for two staves. The top staff is for the saxophone, and the bottom staff is for the piano. The saxophone part begins with a melodic line in E-flat major, marked 'ff sempre prestissimo'. The piano accompaniment features a rhythmic pattern of dotted eighth sixteenth notes, marked 'ff sf'. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, accents, and dynamic markings.

While the opening motive from the first movement is utilized in the third movement, the dotted eighth sixteenth note figure is rhythmically reversed. The figure is used in a repeated fashion similar to the beginning of the first movement for the purpose of preparing the entrance of the solo line (see Figure 2.10).

³⁹ Randel, Don Michael. *The New Harvard Dictionary of Music*, 717.

Figure 2.10 – The use of the opening motive in movement III (m. 5-12)



The third movement begins with an introduction in the dominant key of B flat-major. It quickly transitions to E-flat major as tonic with the A theme in measure 27. The key center of the movement embodies the key of E flat-major but often modulates to the dominant key during the A themes. This tonal shift between tonic and dominant keys continues throughout the movement, resulting in the listener accepting B flat-major as the home-base key. The soloist’s final note ends firmly on a concert E-flat, bringing finality to this key at the conclusion of the movement.

The theme presented in the A sections of the music is used by Dahl primarily in the orchestration/accompaniment (see figure 2.11). This theme is in a ritornello style, in which a musical melody is repeated within sections in a tutti fashion. The passing of melodic content between the solo part and accompaniment creates a form of musical conversation comparable to Concerto Grosso form. The result is a true “collaborative effort” between the soloist and collaborating musicians.⁴⁰

⁴⁰Carla Budzian McElhaney. *The Saxophone and Piano Version of Ingolf Dahl’s Concerto for Alto Saxophone: A Guide to Performance for the Collaborative pianist.* (D.M.A. Diss., The University of Texas, 1998), 72.

Figure 2.11 – The A theme of movement III (m. 27-30)



During the final measure of movement three, the saxophone and accompaniment conclude on a concert E-flat. While the piano arrangement of the score indicates that the soloist play the final “hit” on the second half of the last beat, Dahl’s original manuscript indicates that the final note should occur on the downbeat (first half) of the last beat.⁴¹ A breath mark is indicated in the piano reduction by Harvey Pittel. The breath mark is notated between the second to last measure and final measure, suggesting a slight lift or more “placed” final note. This musical consideration implies that the eighth rest in the final measure is unnecessary.

⁴¹ Carla Budzian McElhaney. *The Saxophone and Piano Version of Ingolf Dahl’s Concerto for Alto Saxophone: A Guide to Performance for the Collaborative pianist*, 67.

Conclusion

Dahl's *Concerto for Alto Saxophone and Wind Orchestra* embraces the virtuosic potential of the saxophone. Over 40 years later, Swerts' *Klonos* was composed for the purpose of an international music competition and is now considered a core contemporary saxophone work. These two pieces exemplify the continued success of concert saxophone literature and solidify the saxophone as a flexible instrument strongly suited in performance of a wide range of musical styles.

Both works explore the limits of musical contrast in terms of dynamics, range, and technical brilliance. These pieces embody the extremes of musical expression through the use of extensive altissimo passages, conventional and unconventional tonalities, and dramatic shifts in musical character. In addition to the musical merit of Dahl's *Concerto* and Swerts' *Klonos*, these pieces have great audience appeal, further recognizing the artistic merit of these works outside of the saxophone musical community.

Preparing either of these two important pieces can prove to be a daunting task for even a highly skilled saxophonist. Familiarizing oneself with important motives, scale patterns, and form, as identified and examined in this report, a saxophonist has the ability to more efficiently prepare this music for effective performances.

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