

Analysis of a master of music recital: a showcase of the saxophone in a variety of styles

by

Michael Meier

B.M., Kansas State University, 2015

A REPORT

submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

MASTER OF MUSIC

School of Music, Theater, and Dance
College of Arts and Sciences

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY
Manhattan, Kansas

2017

Approved by:

Major Professor
Dr. Anna Marie Wytko

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Abstract

The saxophone is a versatile instrument utilized in a variety of musical styles. Paul Creston's *Concerto for Alto Saxophone and Orchestra*, Claude Debussy's *Rhapsodie pour Orchestre et Saxophone*, and Edison Denisov's *Sonate pour Saxophone Alto et Piano* are among some of the most important, original works for saxophone. The saxophone can also effectively be utilized in music from earlier time periods. For example, the saxophone is capable of producing tonal colors that closely mirror tonal colors associated with string instruments. These parallels make transcriptions of the *Six Suites for Solo Cello* by Johann Sebastian Bach particularly effective when performed on saxophone. This master's report, presented as extended program notes, includes biographical information about the composers, a stylistic overview of the selected works, and thoughtful performance considerations.

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Chapter 1 - Johann Sebastian Bach's *Suite No. 5 for Solo Cello*

Johann Sebastian Bach

Johann Sebastian Bach was a composer and organist of the Baroque period. He was born in Eisenach, Germany on March 21, 1685, and he was the son of Johann Ambrosius Bach and Maria Elisabeth Lämmerhirt. Bach held many different positions in Germany as a church organist. One of the more famous positions which Bach held occurred in 1708, when he served as the Duke of Weimar's 'Capelle und Kammermusic' in Weimar. During this time, he wrote some of his most notable pieces for organ, including his preludes and fugues.¹ Some of these keyboard works would later be assembled into Bach's famous collection of pieces titled *The Well-Tempered Clavier*.

Perhaps the most famous and well-paying position which Bach accepted was as Kapellmeister of Prince Leopold's Court Orchestra in Cöthen in August of 1717.² His compositional output shifted primarily to secular music while holding this position. Some of the most highly regarded works Bach composed during this time were his *Six Suites for Solo Cello*, pieces for solo violin, and various different orchestral suites.

Bach moved to Leipzig in 1723 and lived there until his death. He became the Music Director for several different churches in Leipzig and wrote most of his church cantatas during

¹ Wolff, Christoph, et al. "Bach." *Grove Music Online*. *Oxford Music Online*. Oxford University Press, accessed February 27, 2017.

² *Ibid.*

this period for weekly services. Bach died of a stroke in Leipzig during the evening of July 28, 1750.³ His music did not gain serious recognition until the first half of the 19th century.

Six Suites for Solo Cello

Bach's *Six Suites for Solo Cello* were composed around 1720 during his time as Kapellmeister in Cöthen. They were later published in Leipzig in 1825.⁴ The term "Suite" is of French origin meaning "succession." *Grove Music Online* defines a Suite as an ordered set of instrumental pieces meant to be performed during a single sitting. Suites of the Baroque period abide by specific forms and styles of dance music that share the same tonal center.⁵

Each of the six Suites contain six movements. The following dances exist within each Suite: *Allemande*, *Courante*, *Sarabande*, and *Gigue*. A fifth dance is commonly presented prior to the *Gigue*. This movement is either a *Minuet*, *Bourrée*, or a *Gavotte*. Bach also begins each Suite with a *Prelude*. A *Prelude* is defined as a piece that precedes music whose tonic, mode, or key it was designed to introduce.⁶

Bach wrote preludes to many of his pieces, most notably his fugues for keyboard instruments. Most of the *Preludes* in the Cello Suites were originally composed without a meter or note values. This enabled the performers to improvise and embellish the rhythms.⁷ The two Cello Suites that do not follow this pattern are the second and fifth. These two Suites contain *Preludes* that were composed with rhythmic clarity.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Wolff, Christoph, et al. "Bach." *Grove Music Online*. *Oxford Music Online*. Oxford University Press, accessed February 27, 2016.

⁵ Fuller David. "Suite." *Grove Music Online*. *Oxford Music Online*. Oxford University Press.

⁶ Ledbetter, David and Howard Ferguson. "Prelude." *Grove Music Online*. *Oxford Music Online*. Oxford University Press, accessed April 24, 2016.

⁷ Kynaston, Trent. Preface. *J. S. Bach: Six Suites for Violoncello Solo*. Germany, Advance Music, 1995. 6.

The *Allemande* is a German dance that dates back to the 1500's. The term *Allemande* in French means "German." The *Allemande* differs from the other movements in that it is typically in 4/4 meter. The other dances are normally in 3/4, 2/4, or in compound time. A motive common to the *Allemande* is an anacrusis preceding the first full measure.⁸ This motive is present in the *Allemande* from Bach's *Cello Suite No. 5*. The anacrusis creates a stately character in the music because it adds emphasis to the first gesture of the melody.

A *Courante* is a dance in triple time, usually written at a quick tempo. The origins of the dance are not completely certain, but *Courante* in French means "running." During the Baroque period this dance appears in one of two different styles, either French or Italian. The Italian style is in a fast triple meter with running sixteenth notes or eighth notes, whereas the French style is in a moderate triple meter containing more complicated rhythmic patterns.⁹ Most of the *Courantes* from Bach's Cello Suites were in the Italian style. However, the one exception is the *Courante* from *Suite No. 5*, which was written in a French style. This particular *Courante* is typically performed at a slower tempo when compared to the other *Courantes*. It is much more rhythmically complex as well.

The *Sarabande* is a slow dance in triple meter, with an emphasis on beat two rather than beat one. It is a dance that has evolved substantially throughout time. *Sarabandes* prior to Bach's time were light-hearted dances with accompanying lyrics. The lyrics were very satirical, and often offensive to listeners of the time.¹⁰ The *Sarabandes* Bach composed were much more serious in character and closely resemble what a *Sarabande* is known as today. The standard

⁸ Winold, Allen. *Bach's Cello Suites, Volumes 1 and 2 Analyses and Explorations*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2007. 34.

⁹ Ibid. 45.

¹⁰ Kynaston, Trent. Preface. *J. S. Bach: Six Suites for Violoncello Solo*. Germany, Advance Music, 1995. 6.

Sarabande does not include lyrics and represents the slow, expressive movement of a dance suite.

Bach chose to write two *Gavottes* for the fifth movement of *Cello Suite No. 5*. A *Gavotte* is a sophisticated and stately dance written in duple or quadruple time. There are very clear rhythmic motives present in the *Gavottes* of *Cello Suite No. 5*. The rhythmic motive of a quarter note followed by two eighth notes is common throughout *Gavotte I*. This motive gives rhythmic prominence to beats one and three, creating an emphatic character. *Gavotte II* contains a much smaller palette of rhythms. The unified rhythm is a grouping of three eighth note triplets. With the exception of cadence points, this motive of repeated eighth note triplets is the only melodic material present in the movement. This consistent rhythmic structure is reminiscent of the *Preludes* found in the other Cello Suites written by Bach.

The *Gigue* is a lively dance in compound time, either in 6/8 or 3/8 meter. It has many origins, originating from the old French *giguer* (to dance), or German *Geige* (fiddle), or Italian *giga*, or English *jig*.¹¹ The *Gigue* was a common dance to end any multi-movement piece of the Baroque period because of its cheerful nature. This playful character is created by jagged leaps at a lively tempo. A reoccurring motive of a pickup is present in the *Gigue* from *Cello Suite No. 5*. Most measures end with an eighth note or three sixteenth notes. Each of these gestures resolve over the bar line. This creates a constant feeling of forward motion that contributes to the upbeat nature of the *Gigue*.

¹¹ Kynaston, Trent. Preface. *J. S. Bach: Six Suites for Violoncello Solo*. Germany, Advance Music, 1995. 6.

Transcription to Saxophone

For the purposes of this report, I will be comparing the cello version of *Suite No. 5* to Trent Kynaston's transcription for saxophone. Kynaston's transcription of *Suite No. 5* is a member of his collection of Bach's Cello Suites transcribed for solo saxophone.¹² *Grove Music Online* defines a transcription as an arrangement of a musical composition for a performing medium other than the original.¹³ This comparison to the cello version will be made assuming the player is performing Kynaston's transcription on baritone saxophone. The range and tessitura between the cello and the baritone saxophone are strikingly similar. It was not uncommon for performers during the Baroque Period to present music on any instruments available to them. Bach commonly transcribed his music for other instruments; he wrote a version of *Suite No. 5* for the lute.¹⁴

Regarding range, *Suite No. 5* is written in C Minor and outlines two-and-a-half octaves. *Suite No. 5* also calls for the cellist to perform using the technique of scordatura. Scordatura is a term applied to string instruments to designate a tuning other than the normal, established one.¹⁵ *Suite No. 5* calls for the cellist to tune the highest string to G rather than A. This places the written range on saxophone from low C to high F. This playing range is a comfortable one that maintains a natural character when compared to the original version for cello (see Figure 1.1).

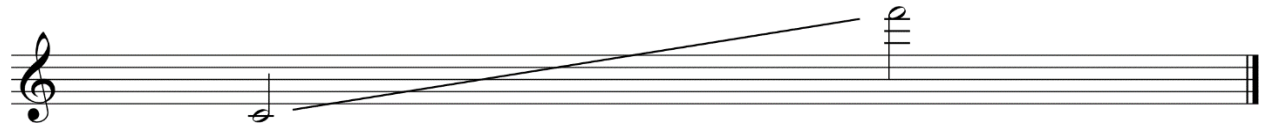
¹² Kynaston, Trent. *J. S. Bach: Six Suites for Violoncello Solo*. Germany, Advance Music, 1995.

¹³ Ellingson, Ter. "Transcription." *The Oxford Dictionary of Music*, 2nd ed. *Oxford Music Online*. Oxford University Press, accessed April 24, 2016

¹⁴ Kynaston, Trent. Preface. *J. S. Bach: Six Suites for Violoncello Solo*. Germany, Advance Music, 1995. 6.

¹⁵ Boyden, David et al. "Scordatura." *Grove Music Online*. *Oxford Music Online*. Oxford University Press, accessed April 22, 2016

Figure 1.1: Playing Range of Suite No. 5 in C Minor (Saxophone Transcription)



Trent Kynaston wrote a preface to his collection of transcriptions, and he explains the following in regards to the challenge of transcribing this music:

The one difficulty in editing the Suites for saxophone is dealing with all the double, triple, and quadruple stops. These are written as grace notes and can actually be played in a manner imitating the style of the cello with considerable success. The only place they tend to be overly cumbersome is in the Minuets, Bourrees and Gavottes, where Bach uses them more regularly. Those which are difficult or awkward to execute without interrupting the rhythmic flow of the music have already been omitted. As each of these movements is charming and effective without any such embellishment, you are free to edit further.¹⁶

This method of transcribing the cello stops as grace notes is effective. Often times when cellists perform the Cello Suites they do not articulate all of the pitches of double, triple, or quadruple stops at one time. It is more common to articulate the lowest pitch first. Once the lowest pitch sounds, the rest of the pitches are added from bottom to top. This is imitated effectively as grace notes on the baritone saxophone because the lower tessitura of the instrument is very resonant. This resonance creates the “illusion” that the lowest pitch is still sustained while the higher pitches are played. Figure 1.2 contains a side-by-side comparison between the two versions highlighting this difference. This comparison between the grace notes and stopped chords is most clearly observed on beat one of measures one and two.¹⁷

¹⁶ Kynaston, Trent. Preface. *J. S. Bach: Six Suites for Violoncello Solo*. Germany, Advance Music, 1995. 7.

¹⁷ Dörffel, Alfred. “Suite No. 5.” *Bach-Gesellschaft Ausgabe*. Volume 27. Leipzig, Breitkopf und Härtel, 1879.

Figure 1.2: Opening Measures of “Prelude” from Suite No. 5 in C Minor (mm. 1-5)

The image displays a musical score for the opening measures (mm. 1-5) of the Prelude from Suite No. 5 in C Minor. The score is arranged in four staves, each representing a different instrument: Violoncello, Vc., Baritone Saxophone, and Bari. Sax. The key signature is C minor (three flats) and the time signature is 4/4. The Violoncello and Vc. parts are in bass clef, while the Baritone Saxophone and Bari. Sax. parts are in treble clef. The Baritone Saxophone part includes a tempo marking of quarter note = 100 and a dynamic marking of forte (f). The Bari. Sax. part includes a breath mark (comma) above the first measure and a breath mark (comma) above the fourth measure.

Dynamic and pacing indications notated in the saxophone transcription are of particular interest. In the original manuscript, Bach did not notate any dynamic, tempo, or metronome markings. Those aspects of the music were almost always left to the interpretation of the performer during the Baroque period. In Trent Kynaston’s transcription, he has suggested all of these musical nuances. The markings he has indicated give the present day performer a starting point. However, it is ultimately the performer’s prerogative to determine dynamic and tempo markings that he/she believes are most musically effective. It would be in the best interest of any performer to listen to a variety of professional cello recordings and other recorded transcriptions in order to determine when to use these musical nuances.

Performance Considerations

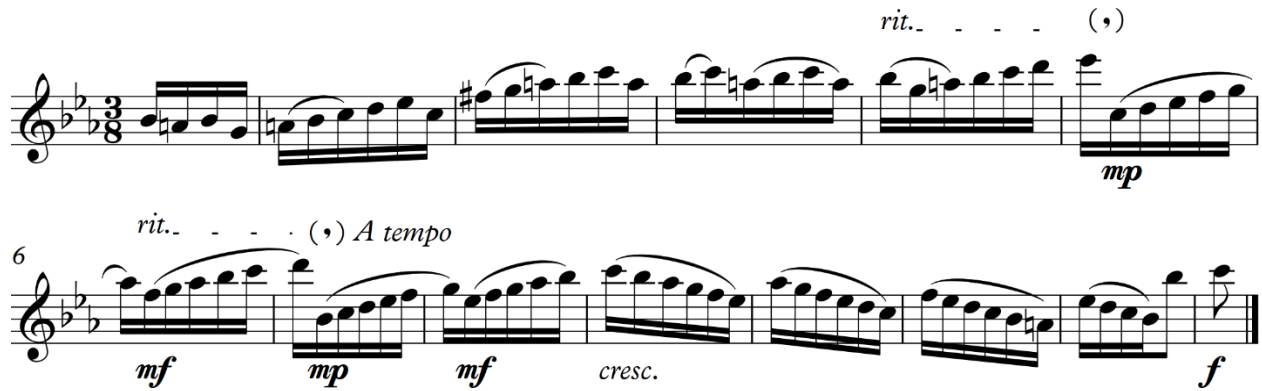
A fundamental difference between performing music on saxophone as opposed to cello is how sound is produced. The cello produces a tone by gliding a bow across the string, causing the string to vibrate.¹⁸ Sound on the saxophone is produced by air vibrating the reed.¹⁹ The cello is naturally performed with a nimbler articulation due to the nature of how the bow interacts with the string. The saxophonist must compensate for this by incorporating a delicate articulation style. It is easy for the Cello Suites to sound heavy on saxophone due to this difference.

When the Cello Suites are performed on saxophone, breathing is a vital consideration. Bach often wrote long phrases in this music. These long phrases create a challenge for saxophonists due to the physical requirement of breathing. One approach wind players might consider is to prepare the phrase by relaxing the tempo in order to create a more natural “breath” or brief pause in the music. This allows the player to physically breathe and then continue the melodic line. Musical character changes including dynamics and range, as well as implied harmonic cadence points, can serve as thoughtful breathing/phrasing options. Possible breathing/phrasing options are indicated (see Figure 1.3).

¹⁸ Bonta, Stephen, et al. "Violoncello." *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online.* Oxford University Press, accessed July 10, 2016.

¹⁹ Raumberger, Claus and Karl Ventzke. "Saxophone." *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online.* Oxford University Press, accessed July 10, 2016.

Figure 1.3: Phrasing Example in “Prelude” from Suite No. 5 in C Minor (mm. 59-72)



A present day performer must also carefully consider how to perform any music of the Baroque period. During this time, it was customary to begin trills from the upper neighbor. The only instance where this is not true is during faster passages in the music. During faster moments, the upper neighbor is often already present and it is not always necessary to re-articulate it.²⁰ The practice of beginning trills from the upper neighbor is common in music of the Baroque and Classical periods and should be applied to the Cello Suites.

Additional ornamentation is another important consideration. Ornamentation in earlier periods of music is often left to the performer’s discretion and is not notated within the music. Adding mordents, inverted mordents, turns, or inverted turns in accordance with the style is another way to personalize the interpretation.²¹ Inverted mordents are a common type of ornamentation. They typically occur during arrival points where they suspend the resolution. Turns are also a common ornamentation; they add tension before a high point of the phrase.

²⁰ Kynaston, Trent. Preface. *J. S. Bach: Six Suites for Violoncello Solo*. Germany, Advance Music, 1995. 7.

²¹ *Ibid.*

Figure 1.4: Performance Practice of Baroque Ornamentation, from *Suite No. in C Minor*



It is important that all of these musical nuances are performed with consistency (see Figure 1.4). If one chooses to begin trills from the upper neighbor, it is important to maintain that approach. The amount of additional ornamentation not already included in the music should be carefully considered as well. For example, one section should not have significantly more ornamentation than the other if both sections are of the same style or length. Ultimately, these decisions are defined by the performer. No two interpretations will ever be the same; in a sense, every performance becomes a “new” transcription. Trent Kynaston includes one final, important quote in his preface by famous Bach interpreter Pablo Casals:

When interpreting Bach’s music is concerned there are no hard and fast rules... The best thing to do is to discard all preconceived ideas and try to approach in our performances whatever the music conveys to us... I cannot subscribe to the view that Bach’s style belongs to a past age. It is just great music...²²

²² Kynaston, Trent. Preface. *J. S. Bach: Six Suites for Violoncello Solo*. Germany, Advance Music, 1995. 7.

Chapter 2 - Paul Creston's *Concerto for Alto Saxophone and Orchestra (or Band)*

Paul Creston

Paul Creston (born Giuseppe Guttovveglio) was an Italian American composer of the 20th century. He was born into an Italian immigrant family in New York, NY on October 10, 1906. Creston learned piano and organ at a young age. He was also self-taught in music composition and theory. Creston decided to pursue a career in composition in 1932. His first piece was composed during the same year titled *Five Dances* for Piano.

He became more involved with the National Music League around this time. This was an organization that assisted the careers of young performing artists. One artist who auditioned for the National Music League in 1934 was a prominent classical saxophonist, Cecil Leeson. Creston was assigned to be Leeson's piano accompanist after his audition.²³ The two of them became great colleagues, and performed a tour of various cities throughout the Central and Southwestern United States in 1936.²⁴

Creston gained recognition as a prominent composer in the 1940's. He received the New York Music Critic's Circle Award for his *Symphony No. 1*.²⁵ Creston received a Guggenheim Fellowship to begin teaching composition and piano at the Cummington School of the Arts in

²³ Morris, Willie Lee, III. "The Development of the Saxophone Compositions of Paul Creston." Order No. 9629007, University of Missouri - Kansas City, 1996. 101.

²⁴ Slomski, Monica J. *Paul Creston: A Bio-bibliography*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1994. 6.

²⁵ Simmons, Walter. "Creston, Paul." *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*. Oxford University Press, accessed July 13, 2016.

Massachusetts. It was around this time when he composed his two most popular works for saxophone. He completed his *Sonata for Alto Saxophone and Piano (Op. 19)* in 1939, and his *Concerto for Alto Saxophone (Op. 26)* in 1941. They were both dedicated to Cecil Leeson. *Sonata for Alto Saxophone and Piano* was premiered by Leeson and Creston on February 15, 1940 in Carnegie Hall.²⁶ The *Sonata* would become one of the most popular pieces written for saxophone and a standard piece in the classical saxophone repertoire.²⁷

Maintaining a strong presence in the 1940's and 50's, Creston continued to be one of the most widely performed American composers.²⁸ He continued to be active in musical organizations such as the National Association for American Composers and Conductors during 1956-1960. Creston was also the author of two books, *Principles of Rhythm* and *Rational Metric Notation*. He died on August 24, 1985 in Poway, California.²⁹

Concerto for Alto Saxophone and Orchestra (or Band)

Following Leeson and Creston's tour of Creston's *Sonata for Alto Saxophone and Piano*, Leeson sought a commission for Creston to write a full length concerto for the saxophone. Leeson collaborated with a coalition of band instrument manufacturers to provide the funds for a commission. He met with Creston following a concert on April 19, 1940 to present the commission. Creston agreed to write the *Concerto* and began working on it immediately.³⁰

²⁶ Slomski, Monica J. *Paul Creston: A Bio-bibliography*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1994. 58.

²⁷ Morris, Willie Lee, III. "The Development of the Saxophone Compositions of Paul Creston." Order No. 9629007, University of Missouri - Kansas City, 1996. 113.

²⁸ Simmons, Walter. "Creston, Paul." *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*. Oxford University Press, accessed July 13, 2016.

²⁹ Slomski, Monica J. *Paul Creston: A Bio-bibliography*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1994. 13.

³⁰ Morris, Willie Lee, III. "The Development of the Saxophone Compositions of Paul Creston." Order No. 9629007, University of Missouri - Kansas City, 1996. 122.

The *Concerto for Alto Saxophone* was the first concerto written by Creston. Until 1940, Creston had been reluctant to write any concerto because of orchestration challenges. However, he held a different opinion for the combination of saxophone and orchestra. Creston felt that the saxophone would be a fitting instrument for which to write a concerto because of the instrument's versatility. In an article titled "The Saxophone in Concert," Creston stated the following in regard to writing the *Concerto for Alto Saxophone*:

It was like putting an ineffectual David against an overpowering Goliath. But here was an instrument that could match in power and agility, the full combination of woodwinds, brass and strings. There was no need to reduce the number of players or to submerge the orchestra in pianissimos. The saxophone can match the agility of the piccolo and the power of the trombone.³¹

Creston completed the *Concerto* in September of 1941. He sent the completed saxophone part and piano reduction to Leeson later that same month. Creston anxiously anticipated hearing from Leeson regarding his progress with learning the piece. However, Leeson did not converse with Creston again until December of 1942. In a note from Leeson, Creston learned that Leeson had enlisted in the Naval Forces. This news was problematic to Creston because members of the Navy Band had less performance flexibility outside of the organization.

Creston was worried that the *Concerto* would not be performed if Leeson were to continue as a member of the Navy Band.³² Creston began searching for another individual who could premiere the *Concerto*. He sought out saxophonist Vincent Abato, who agreed to premiere the piece with the New York Philharmonic. The *Concerto* was premiered on January 27, 1944, conducted by Wilhelm Steinberg. The piece was received very positively. Leeson heard of the

³¹ Morris, Willie Lee, III. "The Development of the Saxophone Compositions of Paul Creston." Order No. 9629007, University of Missouri - Kansas City, 1996. 123.

³² Ibid. 129.

premiere and did not communicate with Creston for almost 12 years. The two resumed correspondence in 1956.³³

In 1962, Creston decided to transcribe the *Concerto* for symphonic band. He was concerned that some of the idiomatic string passages would not translate well to band, but was successful with the transcription nevertheless. The solo saxophone part was never a concern to him. He believed that the saxophone was the preeminent instrument for a concerto.³⁴ The symphonic band version of the *Concerto* was premiered on October 28, 1962, with Abato again as the soloist.

Formal Structure

I. Energetic

Paul Creston's forms are clear, concise and well organized, displaying notable ingenuity in thematic development.³⁵ The first movement of the *Concerto for Alto Saxophone* features two principal themes. These two themes will be referred to as Theme A and Theme B for the purposes of this report. Theme A is initially stated at the beginning of the piece in the left hand of the piano (see Figure 2.1).

³³ Ibid. 131.

³⁴ Morris, Willie Lee, III. "The Development of the Saxophone Compositions of Paul Creston." Order No. 9629007, University of Missouri - Kansas City, 1996. 131.

³⁵ Simmons, Walter. "Creston, Paul." *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*. Oxford University Press, accessed July 13, 2016.

Figure 2.1: Theme A of “I. Energetic” from *Concerto for Alto Saxophone* (mm. 1-9)

Energetic ♩ = 138



5

This music represents the predominant melodic material of measures 1-65 (see Figure 2.1). The material is first stated in an energetic and accented fashion. After a few short interjections, Theme A returns in measure 44 in the saxophone part. This return of Theme A is much more lyrical, featuring slurs over bar lines and dynamic swells. The section concludes with a dramatic crescendo leading into the next major portion of the movement.

Measures 66-105 predominantly contain Theme B. This section contains a distinct change into a lighter character. The tempo is also a little quicker, increasing from 138 to 152 beats per minute. Theme B is much more syncopated when compared to Theme A. Creston’s use of accents and articulation creates a shift in “metric feel” without an actual change in meter. A “feel” of 6/8 is implied and juxtaposes the music clearly felt in 3/4 time (see Figure 2.2).

Figure 2.2: Theme B of “I. Energetic” from *Concerto for Alto Saxophone* (mm. 74-79)



The piano restates the accented version of Theme A in a different key during measures 106-125. The saxophone part contrasts in measures 126-135 by presenting the lyrical version of Theme A (see Figure 2.3). This lyrical change in character is highlighted with longer slur groupings and phrases. Creston further showcases this change by including the text “with great expression” in the saxophone part.

Figure 2.3: Lyrical Theme A of “I. Energetic” from *Concerto for Alto Saxophone* (mm. 126-135)



Measures 177-180 are a transitional passage juxtaposing motives of the lyrical Theme A and Theme B (see Figure 2.4). Theme B is directly restated by the piano in measures 177 and 180. Measures 178 and 179 are reminiscent of the Theme A material from an earlier point in the

movement. This sudden shift in themes further showcases the developmental nature of the transition.

Figure 2.4: Transitional Period of “I. Energetic” from *Concerto for Alto Saxophone* (mm. 177-180)

The image displays a musical score for the transitional period of the first movement of the Concerto for Alto Saxophone, measures 177-180. The score is written for Alto Saxophone and Piano. The Alto Saxophone part is in the treble clef, and the Piano part is in the grand staff (treble and bass clefs). The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 3/4. The music is marked with a forte dynamic (*f*). The Alto Saxophone part features a melodic line with a mix of eighth and quarter notes, including a prominent scale-like passage. The Piano part provides a harmonic accompaniment with chords and moving lines in both hands, also featuring scale-like passages in the right hand.

In measures 237-262, the final major section of the work, the piano plays an augmented version of Theme A while the saxophone presents virtuosic scale passages reminiscent of Theme B. This could be seen as another juxtaposition of the two themes that adds a sense of finality to the movement (see Figure 2.5). The movement concludes with a small coda in measures 270-274 (continued on next page).

Figure 2.5: Final Section of “I. Energetic” from *Concerto for Alto Saxophone* (mm. 237-242)

The musical score consists of two systems. The first system shows the Alto Saxophone and Piano parts. The Alto Saxophone part is in 3/4 time, marked with a tempo of quarter note = 138 and a forte (ff) dynamic. It features a melodic line with a slur. The Piano part is in 3/4 time, marked with a tempo of quarter note = 138. It features a triplet accompaniment in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand. The second system continues the same parts, with the Alto Saxophone part ending with a double bar line and repeat dots.

II. Meditative

The form of the second movement is considerably simpler when compared to the other movements. The movement closely follows ternary form (see Table 1). *Oxford Music Online* describes ternary as a form “based on the natural principles of departure and return, and of thematic contrast then repetition.”³⁶ Ternary could also be described as an ABA form. The second movement begins with a nine measure piano introduction. The piano mainly establishes the primary accompaniment motive of this movement in these opening measures.

³⁶ Sutcliffe, W. Dean and Michael Tilmouth. "Ternary form." *Grove Music Online*. *Oxford Music Online*. Oxford University Press, accessed July 18, 2016.

Table 1: Formal Structure of “II. Meditative” from *Concerto for Alto Saxophone*

Sections	Intro	A	B (cadenza)	A	Coda
Measures	1-9	10-35	36-65	66-81	82-87

Section A introduces the saxophone and peaks with an *accelerando* in measures 34 and 35, reaching a climax *sforzando piano* hit on the downbeat of measure 36. Section B is a cadenza featuring the saxophonist as both “soloist” and “accompanist.” The soloistic melody is presented at a louder dynamic while the accompanimental figures are presented in a softer manner. The tempos of the cadenza can be quite flexible due to the improvisatory nature of the solo saxophone part.

Following the lengthy cadenza, the piano enters in measure 66 for the return of the A Section and the completion of the ternary form. The movement concludes with a coda featuring more improvisatory music reminiscent of the Section B cadenza. This small return of the cadenza material showcases Creston’s thoughtful treatment of thematic development.

III. Rhythmic

Movement three is in a rondo form (see Table 2). *Oxford Music Online* defines a rondo as a structure consisting of a specific series of sections; the first section (A) recurs between subsidiary sections (B, C, D etc.) before returning finally to the first section to conclude the composition.³⁷ This movement also begins with a piano introduction that is two measures in length. The introduction in this movement is much shorter when compared to the other two movements; it can be included as part of Section A.

³⁷ Cole, Malcolm. "Rondo." *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*. Oxford University Press, accessed July 18, 2016.

Table 2: Formal Structure of “III. Rhythmic” from *Concerto for Alto Saxophone*

Sections	A	B	A`	C	Transition	A	D	Coda
Measures	1-20	21-47	48-75	76-106	107-120	121-142	143-167	168-191

The music of Section A is very syncopated in style. The downbeat is often blurred with accents placed on weak beats. This A section concludes with the saxophonist performing a dramatic crescendo to a sforzando downbeat at measure 21.

A new theme is introduced in the saxophone part during Section B. This theme is more lyrical in quality compared to the syncopated music of Section A. The piano part features an accompanimental ostinato that retains a syncopated character. This juxtaposition of styles creates a strong sense of departure from Section A.

Section C introduces a new lyrical theme. The accompaniment in the piano is a restatement from the accompaniment of the second movement. *Crescendo* indicates the piano part be played “smoothly” in measure 76. The meter is also more clearly defined in this section; arrival points are more often placed on beat one.

Measure 121 marks the final statement of Section A in which the melodic material returns verbatim. Measure 143 marks the beginning of Section D: the final departure from Section A. Section D features a passionate, but lyrical melody in the saxophone part.

The Coda begins in measure 168, directly following Section D. Unlike a traditional rondo form, Section A does not return. Instead, Creston wrote a final cadenza for the saxophonist. This cadenza features rapid technical passages that are written to be performed as fast as possible. A sense of finality is created with one final arpeggio which ends on a high altissimo B (see Figure 2.6).

Figure 2.6: Cadenza Arpeggio of “III. Rhythmic” from *Concerto for Alto Saxophone*



Rhythmic Performance Considerations

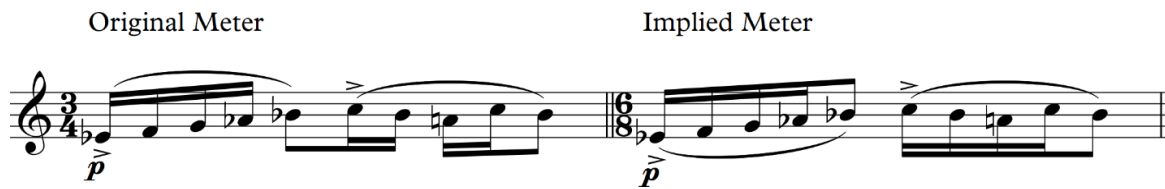
Creston made rhythm the keystone of his style, depending primarily on constantly shifting subdivisions of a regular meter and on irregular ostinato patterns.³⁸ These devices of rhythm appear frequently throughout the entirety of his *Concerto for Alto Saxophone* and are a vital component of his music expression. Each movement features the juxtaposition of contrasting metric “feels.”

I. Energetic

Creston’s device of shifting the “feel” of the meter without actually changing the meter is prevalent throughout movement one. This can be primarily observed during Theme B. The passage remains written in 3/4 meter. However, there are accents placed on beat one and the upbeat of beat two. This creates a feeling of 6/8 meter rather than 3/4. Figure 2.7 compares the first measure of Theme B in the original meter (3/4) to the implied meter (6/8).

³⁸ Simmons, Walter. "Creston, Paul." *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online.* Oxford University Press, accessed July 18, 2016.

Figure 2.7: Meter Comparison of “I. Energetic” from *Concerto for Alto Saxophone* (mm. 74)



The performer should bring out the written accents as much as possible. If the accents are not sufficiently heard, this vital shift in metric “feel” may not be audible. The passage is marked at piano; the performer may also find it helpful and practical to underplay the notes that do not include accents. In addition, the piano part does not reinforce this implied metric shift. This makes it even more necessary for the soloist to bring out the accents. These articulation nuances apply to other instances in this movement where a change in meter is implied.

II. Meditative

Creston believed that all music at its core is either a song or a dance.³⁹ The second movement of his *Concerto* fits his model of a song compared to the other two movements. The song-like qualities of a slow movement make meter shifting a significantly subtler effect. For this reason, the movement is written in 5/4 meter. This meter is inherently asymmetrical, creating a sense of rhythmic irregularity.

Movement two uses hemiola as a primary vehicle for rhythmic interest. *Oxford Music Online* defines hemiola as “the ratio 3:2.”⁴⁰ In music, hemiola can be achieved by juxtaposing a

³⁹ Simmons, Walter. "Creston, Paul." *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*. Oxford University Press, accessed July 13, 2016.

⁴⁰ Rushton, Julian. "Hemiola." *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*. Oxford University Press, accessed July 18, 2016.

grouping of duple eighth notes against a grouping of triplet eighth notes. This rhythmic device is used throughout the majority of Section A (see Figure 2.8).

Figure 2.8: Measures of “II. Meditative” from *Concerto for Alto Saxophone* (mm. 10-12)

The image shows a musical score for two instruments: Alto Saxophone and Piano. The Alto Saxophone part is written in a single staff with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat (B-flat). It features a melodic line with a long note in the first measure, followed by a series of eighth notes in the second measure, many of which are grouped as triplets. The Piano accompaniment is written in two staves (treble and bass clefs) with a key signature of one flat. It consists of a steady accompaniment of eighth notes, primarily in triplet groupings, with some changes in the second measure. The overall texture is characterized by the interplay of duple and triplet eighth notes.

The piano accompaniment presents mostly triplet eighth notes in the first measure, and shifts to duple eighth notes in the second measure. The saxophone continues the melody in the second measure presenting mostly triplet eighth notes. Hemiola is created between the two parts in the majority of this measure. It is important that the saxophonist presents the triplet eighth notes accurately against the duple eighths in the accompaniment. The saxophonist should use minimal rubato in this passage to maximize the effect of the hemiola.

III. Rhythmic

Movement three is perhaps the most rhythmically complex of all three movements (as indicated by the title of the movement). The predominant rhythmic technique of this movement is shifting the feeling of the meter. The movement is written in 4/4 meter, but there are many cases where the music can and should be felt in 3/8 meter. Figure 2.9 compares the saxophone part written in the original meter (4/4) to the periodically implied meter (3/8).

Figure 2.9: Meter Comparison of “III. Rhythmic” from *Concerto for Alto Saxophone* (mm. 12-16)

Original Meter

Implied Meters

The image displays two musical staves for comparison. The top staff, labeled 'Original Meter', is in 4/4 time and contains two staves of music. The first staff has a dynamic marking of *p* and features several groups of notes with accents. The second staff continues the melody. The bottom staff, labeled 'Implied Meters', shows the same musical material with different time signatures indicated by brackets above the notes: 3/4, 3/8, 2/4, 3/4, and 4/4. This staff also includes a dynamic marking of *p* and accents on the notes.

A thorough knowledge of the implied meters is critical for an effective performance. In any instance of an implied 3/8 meter, the performer should bring out the first accent of each grouping. These accents are included in the original manuscript. This author also recommends a light stylistic approach throughout the music of Section A in order to maintain a “dance-like” character.

Chapter 3 - Claude Debussy's *Rhapsodie pour Orchestre et Saxophone*

Claude Debussy

Claude Debussy was born in St. Germain-en-Laye, France on August 22, 1862. He was a French impressionist composer of the late 19th and early 20th century. Debussy was admitted to the Paris Conservatoire at age 10 to study piano and composition. During later years of study, he sought after the Grand Prix de Rome. The Grand Prix de Rome was a highly regarded award pursued primarily by French composers; it provided “official standing, public recognition and, most importantly, monetary support early in their careers.”⁴¹ Debussy won the Prix de Rome in 1884 with his cantata *L'Enfant prodigue*.⁴²

In 1889, Debussy attended the Paris World Exposition. There he heard various performances of oriental music that highly influenced his future compositions. “He was fascinated by the asymmetric rhythms of the thematic content and the new instrumental colors achieved by native players.”⁴³ Debussy also heard exotic modalities that were different from Western art music of the time. These musical qualities would contribute to Debussy's transition from a Romantic style to an Impressionist style.

These exotic musical qualities started to become more noticeable in Debussy's later music. Two of his most famous pieces that possessed these qualities were his orchestral composition *La Mer*, and his opera *Pelléas et Mélisande*. These compositions were completed at

⁴¹ Gilbert, David. "Prix de Rome." *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*. Oxford University Press, accessed August 1, 2016,

⁴² Kuhn, Laura, Dennis McIntire, and Nicolas Slonimsky. “Debussy, Claude.” *Baker's Biographical Dictionary of Musicians*. Vol. 2. New York: Schirmer Books, 2001. 822.

⁴³ *Ibid*.

the height of his career. He continued composing in this style until his death on March 25, 1918 in Paris.

Rapsodie pour Orchestre et Saxophone Alto

Debussy was commissioned by Elise Hall to write the *Rapsodie pour Orchestre et Saxophone Alto*. Hall was born in Paris and moved to America early in her life. She married Richard J. Hall, who was a prominent Boston surgeon. She fell ill to typhoid fever which damaged her hearing. Elise Hall was advised by her husband to take saxophone lessons to prevent further hearing loss. In an effort to create more performance opportunities, Hall founded the Boston Orchestral Club. Through this organization, Hall commissioned famous composers to write original orchestral works for the saxophone.⁴⁴

Elise Hall reached out to Debussy in summer of 1901 to write a piece for saxophone and orchestra. Debussy was struggling financially at the time and quickly accepted the commission.⁴⁵ He ran into complications trying to write the piece; he did not enjoy writing for the saxophone because he was unfamiliar with it. He ceased working on the composition for a while to focus on other new works. A couple years passed and Debussy still had not completed the piece. He sent an autographed copy of his opera *Pelléas et Mélisande* in 1903 to Hall as an apology for the piece taking longer than expected.⁴⁶

Debussy continued to work on other pieces and avoided work on the *Rapsodie*. He eventually finished a condensed orchestral score of the work in 1908.⁴⁷ Despite completing the

⁴⁴ Noyes, James R. "Debussy's "Rapsodie Pour Orchestre Et Saxophone" Revisited." *The Musical Quarterly* 90, no. 3/4 (2007): 416-45. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25172879>. 419.

⁴⁵ Ibid. 420.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Liley, Thomas. Preface. *Rapsodie, Arranged for Alto Saxophone and Piano by Eugene Rousseau*. 2nd ed. St. Louis, Missouri: Lauren Keiser. 2008.

Rapsodie, Debussy neglected to send it to Hall. The original condensed score remained with Debussy until his death in 1918.⁴⁸ The score was given to Jean Roger-Ducasse, a French composer and a friend of Debussy. It is possible that Debussy asked Roger-Ducasse to fully orchestrate the work shortly before Debussy's death.⁴⁹

Roger-Ducasse began creating the orchestral score in April of 1918. Debussy's style of orchestration remained largely intact. Roger-Ducasse's orchestration decisions were based on a thorough investigation of Debussy's orchestration methods.⁵⁰ The work was published in January 1919 under the title *Rapsodie pour Orchestra et Saxophone*. Elise Hall would never hear or perform the *Rapsodie*. Her last known performance was on January 28, 1920 in a condition of near total deafness.⁵¹ The *Rapsodie* was premiered in Paris in 1919 conducted by André Caplet. It is unknown who performed the saxophone part.⁵²

The *Rapsodie* has been met with some criticism throughout history. The primary criticism of the piece is in the insignificance of the saxophone part. The orchestra presents many of the main melodic ideas throughout the work. Several of these themes are not presented in the saxophone part at any point. The saxophonist also plays for less than half of the measures of the piece.

The reason why Debussy composed the *Rapsodie* in this fashion was because the piece was never conceived to be a virtuosic piece for the saxophone. This can be seen in the title of the piece; it is titled *Rapsodie pour Orchestre et Saxophone* rather than "Rapsodie pour Saxophone

⁴⁸ Noyes, James R. "Debussy's "Rapsodie Pour Orchestre Et Saxophone" Revisited." *The Musical Quarterly* 90, no. 3/4 (2007): 416-45. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25172879>. 425.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid. 434.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Liley, Thomas. Preface. *Rapsodie, Arranged for Alto Saxophone and Piano by Eugene Rousseau*. 2nd ed. St. Louis, Missouri: Lauren Keiser. 2008.

et Orchestre.” The original title implies that the orchestra takes precedence over the saxophone. Elise Hall also never requested that Debussy write a formal concerto. It was never designed to be a concert piece, but rather an atmospheric one.⁵³

Eugene Rousseau’s Arrangement

Rapsodie pour Orchestra et Saxophone has been reworked and arranged many times since the first publication of the piece in 1919. The Durand Edition holds the copyright to the original manuscript. Durand published a version with a piano reduction which does not alter the original saxophone part. The *Rapsodie* has also been arranged for and performed on English horn with orchestra.⁵⁴

The piece has been transformed into a virtuosic solo work by numerous arrangers throughout the 20th century. Arrangers would give the saxophone part some of the melodic material that was originally stated by the orchestra. This was first executed by Ernest Ansermet, who arranged the composition for saxophone virtuoso Sigurd Raschèr in 1935.⁵⁵ Famous saxophone pedagogue Eugene Rousseau also released a version reworked in this capacity.

Rousseau’s intention behind arranging the *Rapsodie* was related to the performance flaws of the Editions Durand version with piano reduction. The original piece may be effective with an orchestra, but it was much less satisfying set to the medium of piano and saxophone. Rousseau described the Durand reduction as “a piano solo with saxophone obligato” and “not a stand up solo for the saxophonist.”⁵⁶ Reworking some of the orchestral material into the saxophone part

⁵³ Noyes, James R. "Debussy's "Rapsodie Pour Orchestre Et Saxophone" Revisited." *The Musical Quarterly* 90, no. 3/4 (2007): 416-45. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25172879>. 434.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid. 419.

⁵⁶ Seligson, Robert Jan. "The *Rapsodie for Orchestra and Saxophone* by Claude Debussy: A Comparison of Two Performance Editions." Order No. 8908936, University of North Texas, 1988. 9.

not only created interest in the solo part, but freed the pianist to present the piano part with more ease and in an idiomatic capacity.

Measures 127-130 is a section that highlights this difference (see Figure 3.1). The melody presented in the piano of the Durand reduction is now presented in the saxophone part in Rousseau's arrangement. Moving melodic material to the saxophone part allows the saxophone to be featured in a more soloistic manner. This setting is more appropriate in a solo recital where the saxophonist is the featured performer.

The piano part is also more practically presented in Rousseau's arrangement. The pianist does not have to perform all of the melodic material, allowing both hands to execute the accompaniment in a more practical fashion. This is most evident in the second and third measures of the figure. The Durand reduction calls for the pianist to perform a countermelody and accompaniment in the left hand while the right hand presents the melody. The Rousseau arrangement frees the right hand of the pianist in order to perform the countermelody.

Figure 3.1: Edition Comparison of *Rapsodie pour Orchestre et Saxophone Alto* (mm. 127-130)

The figure displays two musical staves for comparison. The top staff, labeled 'Durand', shows a piano part in 8/8 time with a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#). The right hand plays a melodic line with eighth-note patterns and slurs, while the left hand provides accompaniment with eighth-note chords and a counter-melody. The bottom staff, labeled 'Rousseau', shows the same piano part. In this version, the melodic line is moved to the saxophone part (indicated by a line from the saxophone staff), and the piano part is simplified. The right hand plays a counter-melody, and the left hand provides accompaniment with eighth-note chords. Dynamics include *p* and *pp*.

There are cases in the Durand reduction (and Debussy's original manuscript) where the saxophone presents an accompanying figure against the piano presenting the melody (see Figure 3.2). In an orchestral performance setting, this situation would be acceptable and could be effective. However, in a saxophone/piano version, this would not be as interesting. The melody and accompaniment are reversed between saxophone and piano in Rousseau's arrangement in order to add melodic and rhythmic interest to the saxophone part. This also enables the pianist to perform all of the notes in the left hand of the first measure.

Figure 3.2: Edition Comparison of *Rapsodie pour Orchestre et Saxophone Alto* (mm. 293-296)

The image displays two musical staves, each representing a different edition of the piece. The top staff is labeled 'Durand' and the bottom staff is labeled 'Rousseau'. Both staves are in 6/8 time and feature a saxophone part (top line) and a piano part (bottom line). In the Durand edition, the saxophone part begins with a melodic line marked 'ff' and a '4' above it, while the piano part provides accompaniment with chords and arpeggiated figures. In the Rousseau edition, the piano part begins with a melodic line marked 'ff' and a '4' above it, while the saxophone part provides accompaniment with chords and arpeggiated figures. The piano part in the Rousseau edition is more active, with many notes in the left hand of the first measure.

Performance Position Considerations

The playing position of the saxophonist when performing *Rapsodie pour Orchestre et Saxophone* is an important matter one must consider. Within the medium of saxophone and piano, the saxophonist is considered a soloist. It would be suitable for the saxophonist to stand or be seated in the crook of the piano, allowing the two performers to visually connect with one another. This is an important consideration in a soloistic setting if a performer were to give a visual cue.

The medium of orchestra and saxophone presents many more performance position options. If the saxophonist is performing the original saxophone part written by Debussy, it may be appropriate for the saxophonist to remain seated within the orchestra. This allows the audience to hear the saxophone part when necessary. The orchestra is also allowed to be the primary focus when the saxophonist does not have the melody. This seating arrangement also creates an “immersive” experience for the listener because there is not one soloist that is visually featured for the entirety of the work.

A saxophonist can also be positioned in front of the orchestra. This position creates a concerto soloist-like setting. The saxophonist could stand for the portions of the piece where the saxophone is featured. If the orchestra is featured for an extended period of time, the saxophonist can remain seated in front of the orchestra. This allows the saxophonist to be seen visually during soloistic moments.

Positions are more limited during a performance of the *Rapsodie* in which orchestral melodies are given to the saxophonist. These versions of the piece are intended to showcase the saxophone in a soloistic manner. In this setting, it would be appropriate for a saxophonist to remain standing in front of the orchestra for the entirety of the work.

Chapter 4 - Edison Denisov's *Sonate pour Saxophone Alto et Piano*

Edison Denisov

Edison Denisov was a mathematician and Russian composer of the twentieth century. He was born in Tomsk on April 6, 1929. Denisov studied music and mathematics at Tomsk University in 1946. Dimitri Shostakovich served as a mentor to him. Shostakovich recognized Denisov's talent with composition and urged him to pursue a career in music rather than mathematics. Denisov highly valued Shostakovich's opinion, and ultimately decided to pursue music further at the Moscow Conservatory.⁵⁷

After completing his studies at the Moscow conservatory, Denisov drifted from traditional compositional methods towards an avant-garde style.⁵⁸ Music of this style was not studied or readily available to him during his years at the conservatory. Western composers who utilized contemporary compositional techniques were banned in Russia during Denisov's years of study (1946-1956).⁵⁹ He stumbled upon the music of the Second Viennese School of composers during a lecture-recital by Glenn Gould.

Denisov became increasingly interested in the music of composers such as Anton Webern, Alban Berg, and Pierre Boulez following Gould's tour of Russia. Compositional techniques such as multi-row twelve-tone serialism became a primary vehicle for the majority of Denisov's compositions. His approach to these techniques is slightly different than his

⁵⁷ Norsworthy, Michael and Gerard McBurney. "Denisov, Edison." *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*. Oxford University Press, accessed August 27, 2016.

⁵⁸ VanPelt, Michael. "A Performers Guide to the Music of Edison Denisov." Order No. 3612844, University of Cincinnati, 2013. 6.

⁵⁹ Norsworthy, Michael and Gerard McBurney. "Denisov, Edison." *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*. Oxford University Press, accessed August 27, 2016.

contemporaries primarily because Denisov did not have access to this style of music during his years of study.⁶⁰

Sonate pour Saxophone Alto et Piano

Denisov completed the *Sonata pour Saxophone Alto et Piano* in 1970.⁶¹ It was dedicated to saxophone virtuoso Jean-Marie Londeix. Writing this work for Londeix marked Denisov's first time collaborating with a saxophonist. This collaboration resulted in a piece that would become a standard work in the saxophone repertoire. It receives performances regularly at national and international conferences, and it is a popular work for master classes at universities and conferences.⁶²

The primary compositional language of the *Sonata* is multi-row twelve-tone serialism. The main motive of the first and third movements is inspired by Denisov's mentor Dmitri Shostakovich. Shostakovich would often include his famous monogram DSCH (D-Eb-C-B) in his own compositions. These four pitches make up the first four numbers of the twelve tone row Denisov utilizes in the first and third movements of his *Sonata*.⁶³

⁶⁰ VanPelt, Michael. "A Performers Guide to the Music of Edison Denisov." Order No. 3612844, University of Cincinnati, 2013. 7.

⁶¹ Kholopov, Y and Valeria Tsenova. *Edison Denisov*. Chur, Switzerland: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1995. 110.

⁶² VanPelt, Michael. "A Performers Guide to the Music of Edison Denisov." Order No. 3612844, University of Cincinnati, 2013. 8.

⁶³ Ibid.

Performance Considerations

Denisov's *Sonata* is written in a style which closely resembles the avant-garde music of his later compositional output. This piece contains numerous extended techniques that require the saxophonist to perform the instrument in unconventional ways. In addition, there are highly unusual meters such as 5/16 and 11/32. It is a goal of this author to provide thoughtful recommendations to future performers of this music.

I. Allegro

A chief characteristic of movement one is the frequent changing of the meter. The tempo is marked at 104 beats per minute, with the eighth note receiving the pulse. The first meter of the movement is 5/16, creating an asymmetrical feel. It may be beneficial to the performer to initially feel the movement with the sixteenth note pulse.

The saxophonist should group each asymmetrical measure into groups of two or three sixteenth notes (see Figure 4.1). This decision should be made on a measure by measure basis depending on the musical context. The first measure should be felt as a grouping of two and three. This observation is supported by the slur grouping of the second and third pitches.

Figure 4.1: Measure 1 of "I. Allegro" from *Sonate pour Saxophone Alto et Piano*

Alto Saxophone

mf

mf

* □ = 2 pulses △ = 3 pulses

The most prominent time signature of the movement is 6/16. This meter is first encountered in measure four. Each measure of 6/16 should be felt as two groupings of three sixteenth notes. This approach temporarily gives the dotted eighth note the pulse.

Movement one also contains asymmetry at the level of the thirty-second note. This can be observed first in measure 19 (see Figure 4.2). The meter of this measure is 11/32. There is no one correct approach to this measure, but the author recommends feeling the measure as illustrated in the graphic below. It is also possible to feel the first three sixteenth note pulses as one larger dotted eighth note pulse.

Figure 4.2: Measure 19 of “I. Allegro” from *Sonate pour Saxophone Alto et Piano*

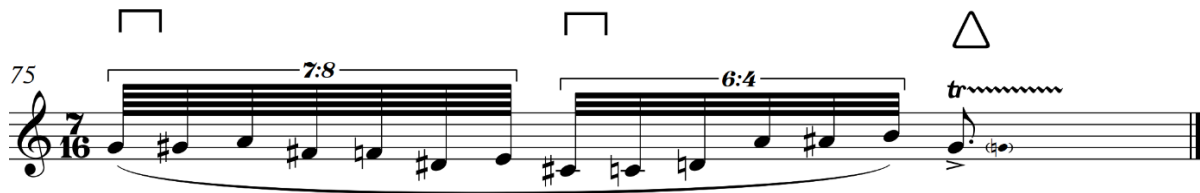
The figure displays two musical staves for measure 19. The left staff, labeled 'Original Manuscript', shows a treble clef with a 11/32 time signature. It begins with a forte (*f*) dynamic and a series of notes, including a triplet of eighth notes. The right staff, labeled 'Meier Interpretation', shows the same notation but with bracketed groupings above the notes and a triangle symbol above the fourth note, indicating a specific rhythmic interpretation. Dynamic markings *f* and *sff* are present in both staves.

Denisov utilizes tuplet groupings with different ratios throughout the entire work. When performing these tuplets, it is important to be aware of the smallest rhythmic value within each grouping. This information is not always the same within each grouping. Each tuplet must be individually evaluated.

Measure 75 contains two tuplet groupings referencing different note values (see Figure 4.3). The first grouping of 7:8 suggests that the performer should play seven sixty-fourth notes over the amount of time it would take to play eight sixty-fourth notes. This amount of time equals two sixteenth note pulses.

The second grouping of 6:4 refers to thirty-second notes. The performer should play six thirty-second notes over the amount of time it would take to play four thirty-second notes. This amount of time would also equal two sixteenth note pulses. The final three sixteenth note pulses are provided by the dotted eighth note at the end of the measure.

Figure 4.3: Measure 75 of “I. Allegro” from *Sonate pour Saxophone Alto et Piano*



The saxophonist is also called to growl or flutter-tongue certain pitches in movement one. This occurs first in measure 61. The decision to growl or flutter-tongue is one that is made by the performer; both techniques prove effective in these passages. *Grove Music Online* describes growling or flutter-tonguing in the following way:

A rough, “dirty” tone achieved in different ways by brass and woodwind players and singers. On wind instruments the growl may be produced by transmitting a guttural rasp from the throat through the lips to the mouthpiece of the instrument, by flutter-tonguing (i.e., causing the tongue to oscillate rapidly by blowing, as if voicelessly rolling an R), or by both. A comparable effect may be achieved by singing one note and playing another.⁶⁴

II. Lento

Movement two of Denisov’s *Sonata* contains the highest number of extended techniques. The performer is instructed to use microtones, multiphonics, and glissandi. It may be difficult to

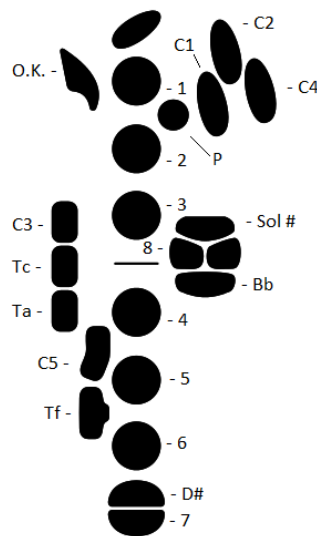
⁶⁴ Kernfeld, Barry. "Growl." *The New Grove Dictionary of Jazz*, 2nd ed.. *Grove Music Online*. Oxford Music Online. Oxford University Press, accessed October 14, 2016.

interpret how these techniques are intended to be performed at a first glance. There are alternatives to a few of the fingering suggestions provided in the saxophone part.

It is imperative that the saxophonist is familiar with these extended techniques prior to attempting to learn this work. A microtone is a pitch that sounds in between two semitones.⁶⁵ A multiphonic on saxophone is created when a certain fingering combination is used which causes multiple tones to sound simultaneously. A glissando is an instruction to slide between two or more given pitches.⁶⁶

Fingerings for all of the required microtones and multiphonics are included in the saxophone part. The fingerings given provide an excellent starting point. However, there are instances where the fingering system is unclear. Figure 4.4 provides a visual fingering chart labeling each key to the symbol specified in the music.

Figure 4.4: Fingering Chart for “II. Lento” from *Sonate pour Saxophone Alto et Piano*

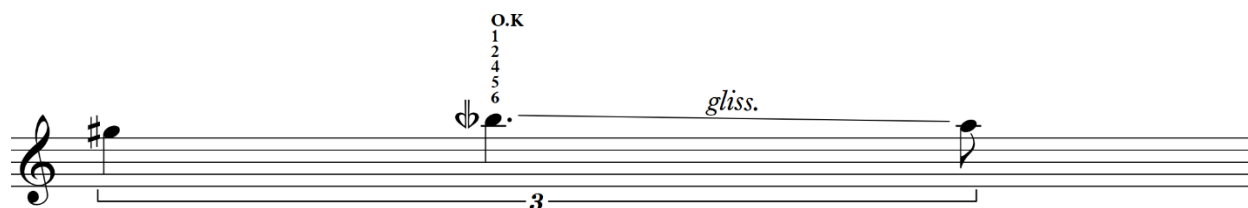


⁶⁵ Griffiths, Paul and Arnold Whittall . "microtone." *The Oxford Companion to Music*. Oxford Music Online. Oxford University Press, accessed October 10, 2016.

⁶⁶ Boyden, David and Robin Stowell. "Glissando." *Grove Music Online*. Oxford Music Online. Oxford University Press, accessed October 10, 2016.

Alternate microtone fingerings can be explored. An example would be the sixth line of the saxophone part. The fingering provided is P, 3, and 5. A more practical fingering would be octave key, 1, 2, 4, 5, and 6 (see Figure 4.5). This alternative makes it more seamless to glissando from the B three-quarters-flat to A natural.

Figure 4.5: Microtone Glissando in “II. Lento” from *Sonate pour Saxophone Alto et Piano*



Various microtone fingering options can also be explored in the tremolo sections. The tremolo between the A and the D-sharp can be executed with C5 versus C4 in the eighth line. The eleventh line tremolo between F-sharp and D can be accomplished more easily using C3 and Tc simultaneously (see Figure 4.4).

There are three multiphonics present in this movement. A common difficulty with performing multiphonics is hearing the lowest written note too prominently. The octave key should be added to the first two multiphonic fingerings of the movement. This fingering alteration adds stability to both figures. The octave key also promotes ease of response for upper partials.

Glissandi are an important feature of movement two. Most of the glissandi occur within a half step or microtone. These gestures can be accomplished practically by slowly lifting or depressing the key required to perform the next note. It is important to keep the airstream constant and consistent.

III. Allegro moderato

The final movement of Denisov’s *Sonata* features rhythmic complexity in conjunction with the other two movements. Movement three includes one time signature for the entirety of the movement – 6/4 meter. The first and second movements differ in this regard in that movement one features frequent meter changes and movement two does not contain a meter, only a rate of pulse.

Note groupings are a reflection of how one might “feel” the music. They are a reflection of motivic, melodic gestures. This creates a challenge when reading the music as downbeats often occur within the middle of a figure. Figure 4.6 compares the original note groupings with groupings that are bound to the meter.

Figure 4.6: Measure 9 of “III. Allegro moderato” from *Sonate pour Saxophone Alto et Piano*

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It may be helpful for the performer to draw vertical lines where downbeats occur in the saxophone part. This practice makes it possible for the saxophonist to present an appropriate

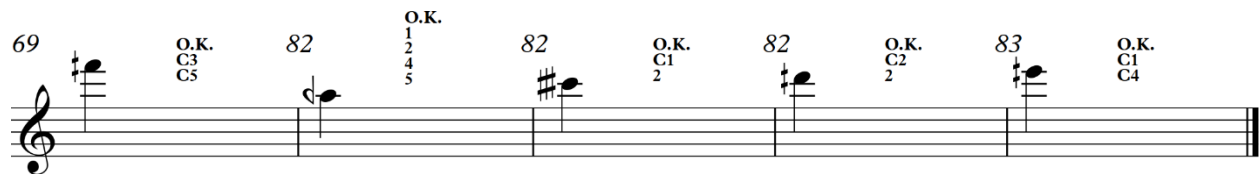
phrasing/feel while maintaining the integrity of the meter. These downbeat references also facilitate secure ensemble with a pianist.

The saxophonist is called to slap tongue in this movement. This is represented by the symbol “*slp.*” It can be found first in measure 20 of the third movement. *Grove Music Online* describes slap tonguing in the following way:

A technique used in playing single-reed wind instruments. Using the length of the tongue, slightly arched, the player presses hard against the reed, at the same time sucking so as to create a vacuum between reed and tongue; he then draws the tongue sharply away so that the vacuum is broken and the reed is released, producing a dull slapping sound. The technique may be used alone, in which case the pitch of the note being fingered is only faintly heard (this is particularly effective in a low register), or to give a loud percussive attack to notes blown in the usual way.⁶⁷

There are a few microtones present in this movement that do not have a fingering suggestion. These pitches occur in measures 69, 82, and 83. Figure 4.7 indicates fingerings for the microtones in these measures. The fingerings provided follow the system of symbols presented in the second movement.

Figure 4.7: Microtone Fingerings for “III. Allegro moderato” from *Sonate pour Saxophone Alto et Piano*



⁶⁷ Shipton, Alyn. "Slap-tonguing." *The New Grove Dictionary of Jazz*, 2nd ed.. *Grove Music Online*. Oxford Music Online. Oxford University Press, accessed October 14, 2016.

Conclusion

The works discussed in this document showcase how the saxophone can be utilized effectively in a variety of different musical styles. Music from the Baroque Period retains the original characters of style due to the flexibility of tone colors and dynamic range possible on a saxophone. The saxophone is also musically effective when performing works written in an avant-garde style as a variety of different extended techniques are possible and create an even greater range of tonal and technical possibilities. Similar to the human voice, the flexible nature of the saxophone makes it a credible instrument for any style of music.

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