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Crossover considerations: performing three works by Ludmila Ulehla, Phil Woods and Bill Dobbins

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CROSSOVER CONSIDERATIONS:
PERFORMING THREE WORKS BY LUDMILA ULEHLA, PHIL WOODS AND
BILL DOBBINS

A Written Document

Submitted to the Graduate faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical college
In partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Musical Arts

In

The School of Music

by

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B.M.E., Stetson University, 1996
M.M., Northwestern University, 1997
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DEDICATION

This project is dedicated to my parents Paul and Ann Perrine, my brother David and my wife Angela for believing in me and being supportive of my goals.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Special thanks to Griffin Campbell, Jeff Perry, Bill Grimes, Bill Ludwig and Willis Delony and Eric Andries for their support, effort and inspiring musicianship.

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ABSTRACT

When musicians prepare a piece of music for performance, they utilize various sources of background knowledge that are available to them. This knowledge can be organized into groups of stylistic attributes suited for the various genres that are in question. This process is made possible by the perspective that history provides. One can comprise a compendium of performance practices provided evidence exists of consistency throughout the style period being addressed. An exciting opportunity presents itself when dealing with the present time. The relationship between the collaborating performers of any music is a delicate one. This task is made challenging with the presence of a style of composition that combines jazz improvisation with historically established models of form. This difficulty is further complicated by the absence of consistent and widespread performance of works of this nature. The purpose of this research is to explore the different interpretive issues that must be considered when performing music of this kind, a style occasionally referred to as crossover music.

The three crossover sonatas examined in this study are *Sonata for Improvisation* by Ludmila Ulehla, *Sonata for Alto Saxophone and Piano* by Phil Woods and Bill Dobbins' *Sonata for Soprano Saxophone and Piano*. Although the backgrounds and compositional styles of these composers are very different, an integral feature of all three pieces is the presence of improvisation. These pieces represent the efforts of a contemporary composer in the case of Ludmila Ulehla, a well-known performing jazz artist in the case of Phil Woods and a seasoned jazz arranger and composer in the case of Bill Dobbins. Approaches to these pieces will be explored by performing the same series of analytical tasks on each piece. Each task will be implemented in a separate chapter.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

When musicians prepare a piece of music for performance, they utilize various sources of background knowledge that are available to them. This knowledge can be organized into groups of stylistic attributes suited for the various genres that are in question. This process is made possible by the perspective that history provides. One can comprise a compendium of performance practices provided evidence exists of consistency throughout the style period being addressed. An exciting opportunity presents itself when dealing with the present time. The relationship between the collaborating performers of any music is a delicate one. This task is made challenging with the presence of a style of composition that combines jazz improvisation with historically established models of form. This difficulty is further complicated by the absence of consistent and widespread performance of works of this nature. The purpose of this research is to explore the different interpretive issues that must be considered when performing music of this kind, a style occasionally referred to as crossover music.

One of the first crossover pieces for saxophone was composed by William Russo, a member of one of the most prominent big bands of the day, the Stan Kenton Orchestra. Russo composed a piece in 1958 for fellow band member Lee Konitz called *An Image of Man* for string quartet, guitar and saxophone. This piece alternated improvisation and extensive pre-composed sections.¹ In a similar way, composer Gunther Schuller, who is known for pioneering the “Third Stream” concept, wrote works for orchestra and jazz quartet in 1959 that featured the Modern Jazz Quartet. Schuller also wrote two pieces recorded in 1960 that featured saxophonist Ornette Coleman, a leader of the “Free Jazz”

¹ Information from composer notes on the sheet music. William Russo, *An Image of Man*, Newton Centre, MA: GunMar Music, 1994.

movement. The first of these pieces is called *Abstraction* which features an improvised cadenza as the “B” section in an “ABA” form. The second was called *Variants of a theme of Thelonious Monk*. This piece featured improvisation throughout.²

Performances of the Russo and Schuller pieces were dependent on the specific people they were written for. Each of these artists possessed performance traits in terms of style that specifically enables each of these pieces. The next step in the evolution of the crossover piece was to put the piece in the context of a more traditional setting that would be playable by a wide variety of performers. This incarnation would offer an opportunity for the pieces to be performed more frequently and with more variety of interpretation. In 1980, jazz saxophonist and composer Phil Woods composed a sonata for saxophone and piano that required both performers to improvise³. This piece could easily be performed on a solo saxophone recital and could be performed by any properly trained performers instead of a specific solo artist or chamber music group. This sonata has inspired other composers to write in a similar format.⁴

The three crossover sonatas examined in this study are *Sonata for Improvisation* by Ludmila Ulehla, *Sonata for Alto Saxophone and Piano* by Phil Woods and Bill Dobbins’ *Sonata for Soprano Saxophone and Piano*. Although the backgrounds and compositional styles of these composers are very different, an integral feature of all three pieces is the presence of improvisation. These pieces represent the efforts of a

² Information from the liner notes to a compilation set by Ornette Coleman called “Beauty is a Rare Thing: The Complete Atlantic Recordings.” notes written by Robert Palmer.

³ This was the first version of the piece. Woods revised it in 1997. The analysis of the sonata in this research is based on the new version.

⁴ Dobbins credits Woods for inspiring them to write their sonatas in the notes included with their pieces.

contemporary composer in the case of Ludmila Ulehla, a well-known performing jazz artist in the case of Phil Woods and a seasoned jazz arranger and composer in the case of Bill Dobbins. Approaches to these pieces will be explored by performing the same series of analytical tasks on each piece. Each task will be implemented in a separate chapter.

The first analytical process that will be implemented is to chart the form of each movement of each work. This will help make the approach to the improvised sections clear by showing how the improvisation functions in the context of the form, and will indicate the degree of formal necessity of the improvised material. This in turn will help guide the performers' compositional concept of the movement and the piece as a whole. The next task is an analysis of the chord/scale relationships found in the improvised sections. This information is gleaned from the graphically notated chord symbols found in the improvised sections. In cases where there are no chord symbols present, other contextual relationships are investigated by using the information from an understanding of the form of the piece as well as stylistic clues found in the areas surrounding the improvisation.

In order to synthesize the information gleaned from the above tasks effectively, techniques for analysis of the melodic contours found in the composed sections of the pieces are found in chapter two. Sometimes the improvised sections are harmonically linked to other sections in the form. When this is the case, the information found through analyzing melodic contour will be used to make a more cohesive link between the sections. An analysis of rhythmic patterns with a focus on the rhythmic connection between solos and notated passages will be similarly helpful and can be found in chapter three.

When the composers of these pieces have included written instructions that mention a specific jazz style (“swing” or “jazz waltz”), the performer needs to observe the stylistic principles appropriate to such passages. These observations should include possibilities for unusual interpretation of articulation markings and rhythms as well as the addition of ornaments (an example of this could be the interpretation of a staccato note as longer in a jazz context versus a traditional context and the “swinging” of an eighth-note line). Other variables to be considered may be tone (including choice of mouthpiece/reed selection) and alteration of vibrato (including changes in speed, depth and regularity). Choices for these will be discussed for each piece in chapter four .

Another factor that will be addressed is the relationship between the two performers in each of these pieces. This will include questions of rehearsal technique and performance practice. Each piece may call for slightly different relationships between the performers at different times. The function of each performer as a collaborative voice may be redefined as the two voices begin to function as collaborating composers.

The final issue that will be addressed is that of pedagogy. When teaching these pieces, the sound concept that the student may have been working with may have to be altered to fit the stylistic context. The teacher may also have to lead the student toward the basic knowledge of jazz theory and practice by means of ear training, jazz composition and solo transcription. The following chapters will demonstrate how some of these concepts are applied to selected pieces of the crossover genre.

CHAPTER TWO: FORM

The form of a crossover piece informs the interpretation of its improvisation sections by defining proportional and stylistic context clues. This information is the focus of this chapter. Later chapters will discuss the harmonic, melodic and rhythmic content. Improvisation serves different formal roles in each movement addressed in this study. Some movements are dependent on the improvisation for completion of a balanced formal structure while other improvisation sections could be omitted and the music would still stand on its own. When the structural roles have been defined, the performers must undertake the task of creating improvisations that complement these roles. The following formal analysis of works by Ulehla, Woods and Dobbins will illustrate this process.

In Ludmila Ulehla's *Sonata For Improvisation*, the improvisations function as development but also as ornaments throughout the piece (as indicated by Ulehla). The composer clearly wants the improvisations to be used in tightly controlled ways that fit within her notated form. She indicates which components of her piece are to be referenced in the improvisations (the form is charted in figure 2.1). One fact that contributes to the confusion of proportion in this piece, however, is that while her labeling of form parts is clear, Ulehla's instructions for improvisation are a bit ambiguous. The questions that are raised as a result of this ambiguity largely concern proportion. Ulehla begins by stating that the work may be preceded by "a soft, short improvised intro." She does not indicate the amount of time she wishes to elapse during

Section	Measure Numbers
EXPOSITION	
Theme 1	1-20
Improvisation	21-22
Transition	23-26
Theme 2	27-39
DEVELOPMENT	
Section 1 (improvise motives from theme 2 and 2 nd phrase of theme 1)	41-42
Section 2 (Development of theme 1 Improvise on theme 1 + composed “Coordinating Figures”)	42-47
Section 3 (Development of theme 2 Composed except piano in meas. 51 And saxophone in meas. 54)	47-59
Cadenza (Composed with improvised “key clicks, improvise freely”	60-61
RECAPITULATION	
Theme 1 (No improvisation)	62-76
Theme 2 (No improvisation)	77-86
Coda (not labeled by composer)	87-97
Improvise in bar 91 in piano “until saxophone enters”	

Fig. 2.1 Ulehla Sonata Form

the introduction. This omission could cause a performer to create something that is too brief to lead into the beginning, which is a unison fortissimo line, or something that is too lengthy, which would skew the proportions of the piece as a whole. If the performer does not begin with an improvisation, the effect of the beginning is of a strong declamatory statement which I believe holds its own as composed. The answer ultimately lies with the performers.

The next instance of improvisation occurs in mm. 21-22. This is placed at the end of the presentation of the “Theme 1” material. The improvisation precedes a short transition into “Theme 2”. The piano part in bars 21 and 22 is enclosed in repeat brackets with the instruction “optional soft improvisation, repeat as often as desired”. The saxophone part features two empty bars in brackets and the instruction “improvise on theme 1, gradually adding tension, but save 16ths for coordinating passage”.¹

Following the improvisation in bars 21-22, there are four bars of transitional material before theme 2 begins. Theme 1 material covers 20 measures and theme 2 covers 14 measures. With these proportions in mind the performers must decide how long the material in 21-22 will last. If no repeats were taken there would be 6 bars of transition between the themes. I would suggest that the improvisation should only be as long as needed to build rhythmic tension from the slow eighth and triplet lines of theme 1 to the sixteenth note line that the composer wants the performer to arrive at in bar 23. If the improvisation is any longer than necessary, the transition material would begin to function as an independent section in the form instead of just a transition.

The next improvised section starts the development section in bar 41. The composer has indicated that the soloist should “Improvise on motives from theme II, and 2nd phrase of theme I. Build *crescendo*”. She has also labeled this section as “DEVELOPMENT SECTION I”. Again Ulehla does not indicate a length of time here. The performers need to be aware that there is another development section to be dealt with after this and should glean some clues from that section’s length. The “DEVELOPMENT SECTION II” features another “coordinating passage” of two

¹ Ulehla uses what she labels “coordinating passages” throughout the piece as transitions.

measures and then an improvisation that begins in the piano part. Uhlhela indicates that the improvisation begins with piano alone and then after a minimum of a 20-second rest the saxophone may add to this before moving on to another “coordinating passage”.

There is a third section to the development that features more composed-out elements. Measures 47-51 are composed, and then the pianist is to “ornament and improvise on theme II” in measure 51. Measure 52 is composed and labeled as a “coordinating passage” and in measure 54 the saxophonist is to improvise using “ornamental staccato and legato.” In the same measure the piano is instructed to “...mimic soprano softly, lightly but returning to sub. *pp*, coordinating motive with bass on F# pedal.” This leads into a coordinating passage that leads in turn to the cadenza in bar 60. The cadenza is composed-out except for a parenthetical instruction that is written at the third and fourth beats, “may use keyclicks, improvise freely.” These keyclicks will be discussed in chapter four.

The third development section seems to contain the most instruction, yet needs the briefest improvisations to achieve equal proportions to the first and second sections. Of course the performers must decide if they want to maintain this proportional equality or work for a more disjunctive relationship. When this balance is decided upon, the development section as a whole must be examined relative to the exposition and recapitulation in terms of proportion. The performers must decide if they wish to feature the development section as a larger, more important section than the surrounding sections (as in jazz where the improvisation is at times far longer than the material on which it is based), or a proportionally equivalent part of a whole work.

Phil Woods’s *Sonata For Alto Saxophone and Piano* raises the same questions of proportion while utilizing vocabulary more directly associated with jazz (the presence of chord symbols that indicate traditional harmonic and melodic textures commonly found in jazz music). Although there is an introduction and some prologue material that is different, the first movement features a continuous variation form. The variation sequence resembles a passacaglia. The 16-bar harmonic pattern repeats itself several times after the introductory material. Each repetition is treated differently, as outlined in Figure 2.2.

The approach to this variation is somewhat complicated by the fact that Woods writes specific quarter-notes in the saxophone part for the first three bars followed by a whole note in the fourth. Over these notes are chord changes and the written instruction “Alto Solo ad lib.” The piano part is written with block chords in half-note values with the written chord symbols above them. It is not clear if the composer intended the saxophonist to play the quarter note line and then proceed to improvise, or to improvise

<u>Treatment/Section</u>	<u>Measure Numbers</u>
Introduction to Prologue	1-9
Prologue	10-36
Transition to A (C pedal)	36-51
A1 (saxophone has written melody)	52-67
A2 (piano has written melody/saxophone has written obbligato)	68-83
A3 (piano and saxophone have opposing obbligato)	84-99
A4 (saxophone improvises with repeats)	100-115
Transition to piano solo (same as bars 36-51)	118-133
A5 (piano improvises with repeats/ saxophone optional duet)	134-149
Transition to prologue (introductory material again)	154-170

Fig. 2.2 Passacaglia treatments in Woods *Sonata for Saxophone and Piano* First movement.

from the start of the section if the saxophonist chooses to do so. It is also not clear whether the pianist is to play the rhythmic values as given or to improvise a more active line. The correct choices may seem obvious to seasoned improvisers. Even those who are not can decipher a compelling musical realization by thinking through this problem with the aid of the information already gleaned from the written out passages. If the improviser changes the texture too suddenly from the previous section the pace is thrown off. As one might expect in a continuous variation scheme, Woods provides no transition that displaces or shifts the musical direction from the previous section. These repeated sections have been at the same tempo and harmonic content since beginning in bar 52.

The rhythmic activity thus far has not been this slow. Immediately preceding this variation, the piano is playing eighth notes and the saxophone part has come out of eighth and sixteenth-note patterns. It then does not make sense to have the piano part playing half-note values at bar 100. It seems clear that Woods provides these half notes in the piano part to supply chord voicings and to define the harmonic rhythm. These half-notes are not necessarily the intended rhythmic unit to be performed.

The quarter notes in the saxophone part can be played if the intensity level is brought up gradually after the fourth bar. If the pianist is playing in rhythmic values that are consistent with the previous variations, the four bars of quarter notes becomes a nice but not drastic departure from the established texture. If the saxophonist chooses not to play this line there may be a problem maintaining the activity level that has been established at bar 100. If the performers begin the section with quick rhythmic values, they may want to consider ways to break down that intensity later on.

The piano improvisation in this movement begins in bar 134. This section is preceded by a transition that provides an opportunity (if desired and/or needed) to reset the intensity level from wherever the saxophone soloist left it. This gives the pianist freedom to start at a different intensity level. This section features an optional improvised duet between the voices. The saxophone part has a composed line that cues the end of this duet. This aspect does put certain restrictions on the pianist if the duet option is taken. If the pianist's improvisation is as long as the saxophonist's and the saxophonist enters into a duet, the whole variation becomes longer than those that preceded it. One solution to this is to treat this as a pair of variations with the solo being one and the duet another.

The second movement features a very brief improvisation toward the end of the movement. Woods provides three chord symbols under fermatas with a written instruction that states "Player should think Free Jazz à la Eric Dolphy. Let yourself go crazy!"² A formal analysis of this movement (which seems to serve as an intermezzo between the first and second) reveals a modified five-part rondo. The improvisation occurs at the end of the "C" section going into the last "A" section. The form is laid out in Figure 2.3.

<u>Section</u>	<u>Measure Numbers</u>
A	1-20
B	21-39
A	40-59
C	60-68
A	69-81

Fig. 2.3 The Woods *Sonata for Saxophone and Piano* Form of the Second Movement.

² Eric Dolphy was a jazz musician who was known for his avant-garde use of extended techniques on woodwind instruments.

In this case, the improvised serves as a transition to the last “A” section. This does not need to be a lengthy improvisation. The improvisation is simply part of a movement that culminates into a simple dominant/tonic relationship. While this cadence is necessary to make the transition to the next section, the improvisation serves as an embellishment to it. Without the improvisation, however, the “C” section would be briefer than the “B” section and therefore make the overall form unbalanced. Since the improvisation leads into the original “A” section material, the performer should connect the intensity of the “C” section to that of the “A” section.

The third movement of this sonata can be reduced to a seemingly simple ABA form. Within the main parts there are subdivisions of form. The “A” section material consists of two parts that are each repeated three times. The form is outlined in figures 2.4 and 2.5.

<u>Section</u>	<u>Measure Number</u>
A	1-50
Transition	51-56
B	57-90
A	91-107

Fig. 2.4 - The Woods *Sonata for Saxophone and Piano* Form of the Third Movement

<u>Section</u>	<u>Measure Number</u>
A1	1-13
A2	14-25
A1 material transitions to saxophone solo	26-29
A1 material (Saxophone improvisation)	30-41
A2 material (Saxophone improvisation)	42-49 (30-49 repeats)
A1 material improvised transition to cadenza	50-53 cad. 53

Fig. 2.5 - A section components.

One problem that arises when trying to interpret the form of this movement as an “AABA” model is that the second “A” is unbalanced because of the presence of repeats in the improvised section. This leaves the first “A” 25 bars long and the total of the improvisation 42 bars long. This creates something resembling an “AAABA” form, which begins to seem unwieldy. The choices then are three:

1. The performer can use the original model “ABA” and not use any improvisation.
2. The performer could cut out one repeat of the improvisation and create the “AABA” model.
3. The performer could play the piece as written and find a way to make the repeated section function in a more graceful manner. To make this last suggestion work, the performer could experiment with the pacing within the improvised material so that it resembles a theme and variation scheme which would make the “B” material function as a very long interlude.

An improvised cadenza occurs after the accompanied improvisation in bar 53. It functions as a transition to the “B” material and, as in the second movement, it needs to dissipate the momentum of the “A” material. Woods again leaves it to the performer to connect these two sections in a graceful manner. It should be approached just as in the second movement, as a brief improvisation that moves from fast to slow.

The fourth movement features some unclear instructions for the performers to interpret. At the beginning there is an instruction for the pianist that reads, “Fixed bottom notes should be approached like a free jazz drummer! Anything goes!” The second bar instructs the pianist to “improvise rhythm agitato” while the saxophone part reads “bluesy

& free & long.” There are only two bars in the saxophone part that feature “slash” notation and Woods instructs the saxophonist to “improvise using harmonics.” The tempo indication at the beginning is “Freely (quarter note =160).” The form is illustrated in Figure 2.6.

<u>Section</u>	<u>Measure Number</u>
Introduction	1-13
A	14-42 (28 bars)
B	43-78 (35 bars)
B1	79-106 (B developed) (27 bars)
Cadenza	107-109 (composed)
A	110-140 (30 bars)

Fig. 2.6 The Woods *Sonata for Saxophone and Piano* Form of the Fourth Movement.

This movement has the least amount of improvisation of the entire sonata. The introduction contains most of the improvisation in the movement. This material functions as a bridge between the material of the third and the rest of the fourth movement. The question of superfluous improvisation here is answered by looking at its function in the form. Without this improvised material (which is not in strict tempo), the move to the rest of the fourth movement from the third would be abrupt and also not provide enough stylistic variety between the movements (both fairly brisk tempos). The improvisation stops the regular pulse of the third movement. This builds tension that is released when the fast tempo of the fourth movement begins in bar 14.

While Woods’s composition provides some option for the omission of included improvisational material, Bill Dobbins’s “Sonata” features passages that rely on the improvisation for cohesion. The form of the first movement is charted in Figure 2.7. The improvisations in this movement function as extended developments of “A” section

material. The improvised sections in this movement make up roughly half of the content. The way Dobbins uses the improvisation section seems to reflect a synthesis of the form sensibilities of the common practice period and jazz. In jazz, the composed sections of a piece are commonly much shorter than the improvised sections, since the latter involves improvising over many repetitions framework of the former.

<u>Section</u>	<u>Measure Numbers</u>
Prelude	1-14
A	15-37
B	40-58
Transition (truncated ABA)	59-75
A ¹ (development) Saxophone Improvisation	76-123
Interlude (B material development)	124-149
Transition (truncated BAB)	149-162
A ¹ (development) Piano Improvisation	163-208
B	209-243
A	244-269
Coda	270-277

Fig.2.7The Dobbins *Sonata* Form of the First Movement

The second movement of the Dobbins sonata features a formal design that is fairly simple yet it requires a great deal of care on the part of the performers when negotiating the chord structures found in the improvisation. The form of this movement is more dependent on the improvisation for cohesion than is the form of the first movement. The form is illustrated in Figure 2.8.

In this movement the “A” and “B” sections are developed during the piano and saxophone improvisations and the “B” material returns following the saxophone improvisation slightly embellished but composed out. It seems clear that Dobbins does

this so as to avoid repetition of an entire “AB” cycle and by doing so ends the movement in a formally balanced manner.

<u>Section</u>	<u>Measure Numbers</u>
Introduction	1-8
A	9-20
B	21-32
Transition	33-35
A ¹ - Piano Improvisation	36-51
B ¹ - Piano Improvisation	52-63
Transition	64-67
A ² - Saxophone Improvisation	68-83
B ² (No Improvisation)	84-100
Transition	101-106
Coda (Introduction Material)	107-114

Fig. 2.8 The Dobbins *Sonata* Form of the Second Movement.

The third movement features a formal structure that showcases improvisation in a different way than the first two movements. The improvisations occur in discreet sections that do not relate to the rest of the movement. This independence offers the performers great freedom in these improvised sections. The form is a seven-part rondo with the “C” section functioning as an interlude marked “salsa”. This passage sounds like an improvisation but is completely composed. The form is outlined in Figure 2.9.

The overall balance of this form features some sections of equal length. The first and last “A” sections are equal to each other and first and last “B” sections are also equal. The innermost “A” sections (mm.69-98 and 41-157 respectively) are not equal because of some extra transitional material to the “C” section in the case of the first and the open

<u>Section</u>	<u>Measure Numbers</u>
Introduction	1-11
A	12-33
B (Saxophone Improvisation)	35-68
A	69-98
C (Salsa Interlude)	99-140
A	141-157 (157 open piano improvisation)
B (Piano Improvisation)	35-68 (DS al coda)
A	69-88 (to coda)
Coda (A material)	158-187

Fig. 2.9 The Dobbins *Sonata* Form of the Third Movement.

section in the second (which is part of the piano solo). I think that this scheme offers an overall balance.

An interesting aspect of the second “B” section is that the improvisation begins with improvised “counterpoint” in bar 157 (which is an open bar with no chord symbols). After this open section, the pianist is to continue at bar 36, which is the repeat of the section that the saxophonist improvises over. In the piano solo, bars 35-38 (which are repeated 4 times in the saxophone solo) are omitted. This exchange balances the two improvisations and gives them a slightly different character while still functioning as contrasting episodes in the form. The coda is quite long and develops the “A” material extensively. This compensates for the omission of any development of “A” material (which normally would occur in the “C” section in a seven part rondo).

All these observations lead to meaningful relation of improvisation to form. All three of these pieces contain very different improvisational vocabulary and varying levels of improvisation from ornamental to essential. One can use the same process of analysis (discovering the form) for each piece to reveal these relationships and thus add to the most meaningful performance of them.

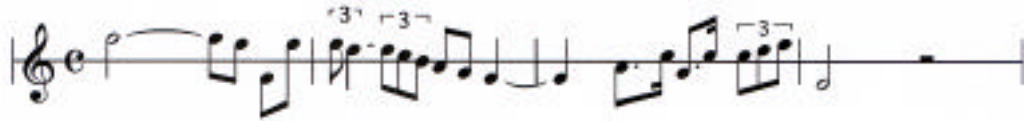
CHAPTER THREE: SHAPES

After the formal issues regarding improvisation are considered, one must determine what pitches and rhythmic shapes to use in these improvisations. The key to the pitch content lies in common practice jazz theory in the case of Woods and Dobbins and melodic context clues in the case of Ulehla. Rhythms for improvisation can be derived from the sections of the pieces with which the improvisations are associated. The combination of the rhythmic units and pitch contours provide shapes that a performer can use for improvised material. These shapes will be illustrated throughout this chapter as combined reductions of rhythmic cells and general melodic contours. In some cases, there are no pre-composed passages associated with the improvised material; alternatives will be discussed.

The lines that are in Ulehla's piece are driven by rhythmic and melodic contour and not by any recognizable functional harmony. The composer is using a blended style in her approach to melodic material. Ulehla uses chromatic horizontal movement as well as recognizable vertical structures (at times they have recognizable chord qualities). She does use some intervallic units in repetition, but no larger pitch motives are consistently evident. Some of the shapes appear below in figure 3.1.

These shapes are the basic motivic blocks that the composer uses. She also uses rhythmic diminution (the difference between measures 1-2 and measures 92-93 appear below in figure 3.2) as well as ornamentation of material (also illustrated in figure 3.2). The performer may consider using these methods as well as inverting the material in the improvisations.

Theme 1 material measures 1-4.



Theme 2 material (condensed) from measures 27-29 and 31-32.



Fig. 3.1 Theme 1 and 2 material (condensed) from Ludmila Ulehla's *Sonata for Improvisation*.

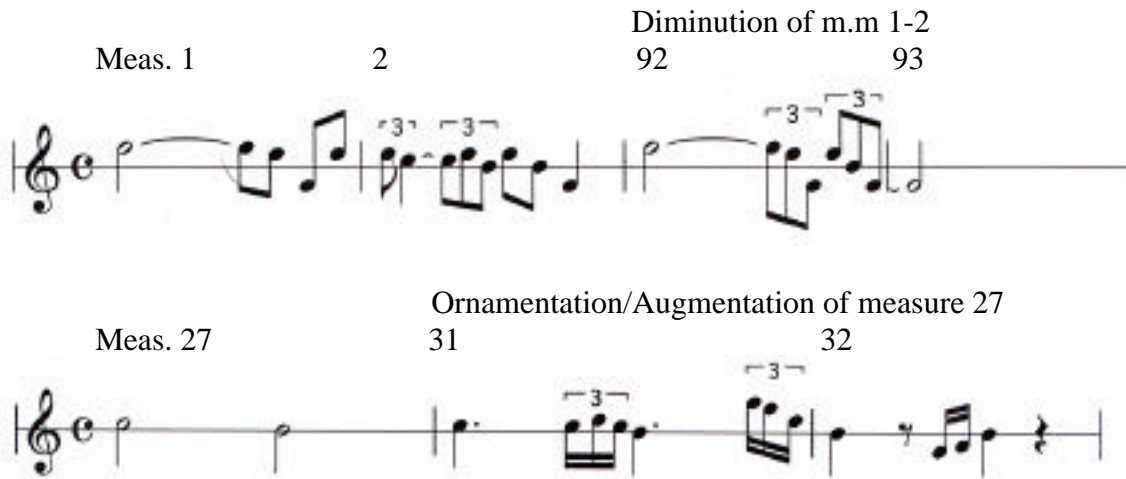


Fig. 3.2 Rhythmic diminution and ornamentation of motives in the Ulehla Sonata measures 1-2 compared to 92-93 and 27 and 31-32.

The pitch choices that must be made in the improvised sections of the Phil Woods sonata are not as elusive as in the Ulehla sonata. Most of the instances of improvisation have standard chord symbols to guide the performer. In some cases these chords have very limited scale choice associated with them. Standard jazz theory covers most of

these (please refer to the jazz theory section of the Sources Consulted section). The chord types and their commonly associated scales found in the sonata are listed below in Figure 3.3.

<u>Chord Type</u>	<u>Scale Choices</u>
Major	Major Lydian
Minor 7	Natural Minor Dorian
Dominant 7	Mixolydian Blues Bebop Scale (same as Mixolydian with both flat and sharp 7ths)
Dominant 7 Sus	Mixolydian (or Dorian of the fifth of chord) ¹
Dominant 9	Same as Dominant 7
Dominant 7#9	Altered Scale (melodic minor on flat 9th) ² Blues
Dominant 7b9	Diminished Scale (half-step/whole-step alternation also known as octatonic) Altered Scale Diminished Scale (half-step/whole-step alternation) Mixolydian with flat 9 (also called harmonic major on fourth scale degree)
Diminished	Diminished Scale (whole-step/half-step alternation)
Half-Diminished	Locrian Locrian #2 (same as melodic minor on the third of chord)

Fig. 3.3 Chord/Scale types found in the Woods sonata Mvts. 1-4.

The context of the first movement indicates bebop lines (extended use of chromatic passing tones and specifically the bebop scale listed above). These lines contain chromatic inflection and emphasis on the upper extensions of chords. If the performer recognizes this relationship to bebop and becomes informed on the subject, it can result in a more consistent performance. Listening to recordings of Charlie Parker

¹ This is the same set of pitches as the mixolydian but offers an easier way to avoid clashing notes (the third against the suspended fourth).

² This scale is also known as Super-locrian.

and Dizzy Gillespie for style and reading David Baker’s “Bebop” for harmonic and melodic syntax will be of great help. Some general shapes of these lines appear in figure 3.4.



Fig. 3.4 First movement shapes in the Woods sonata measures 51-67.

The second movement features only three chords for the soloist to improvise over. They are all dominant sus chords (dominant quality chords with a suspended fourth as a member instead of a third). The pitch material is not difficult to negotiate but the instruction that Woods provides is more problematic. Woods mentions Eric Dolphy as a stylistic model; he writes in three overtones over the root of each of the chords. This implies that he wants either alternations of these pitches or simultaneous sounding of some of the pitches in a multiphonic. Eric Dolphy would do things of this nature on recordings and Woods himself has a “lick” on recordings, such as the compact disc “Into the Woods” (tracks 1 and 3, “All Bird’s Children and “Bop Stew”), that reflects this instruction. If the performer listens to Dolphy recordings, such as the compact disc “Out

to Lunch”, (particularly his use of extended techniques including multiphonics), the improvisations may be more informed.

The pitch material in the third movement is fairly simple. Where the first movement points clearly to bebop syntax, this movement offers a broader stylistic selection to choose from. The shapes in the pre-composed lines contain interesting rhythmic material to use in improvisation. These shapes appear below in figure 3.5. The first the first twelve bars of the improvisation is reminiscent of the modal jazz of the 1960’s with its sustained minor 7th chords and avoidance of tonal relationships in the harmonic progressions.³ A basic attribute of modal jazz is its use of minor pentatonic



Fig. 3.5 Third movement shapes in the Woods (condensed) from measures 3-21.

³ Listen to the recordings by Miles Davis as well as the recordings of Wayne Shorter on the “Blue Note” recording label for further stylistic ideas for modal jazz.

scale patterns in the improvisation (for more information on pentatonics see Jerry Bergonzi’s “Pentatonics”).⁴ Investigation of these shapes as well as the ones in the corresponding sections should provide ample material for a start.

The last eight bars of the improvisation feature a four-bar stretch of chords that imply the harmonic sensibilities of bebop including the use of tritone substitution (replacing a dominant chord with a dominant chord a tritone away). These chords appear below in figure 3.6. The pitch material in the improvised cadenza at bar 53 is basic. Over an A9 chord one could play a multitude of scales but the “A” mixolydian would provide all the necessary chord tones. More colors can be achieved if the performer chooses to use a scale with more dissonance.⁵

At this point, the performer has made a decision about the cadenza’s formal role bridging the material of the improvisation with the following interlude. I think that one should link the cadenza with the pitch and shape material dealt with in the preceding improvisation and let the interlude at 54 be a subito texture change. The cadenza is there to dissipate momentum and ease the listener into this new material but I think it should be done without giving any of the new material away.

C#m7b5 F#7 / B7#9 E7b9 / A7b9 D7 *C#7#9 / **C7 B7b9/ Em7
 VI II V V/IV IV VII VI (III) VI(II) V I
 * possible tritone substitution for G7 ** possible tritone substitution for F#m7b5 (ii half-dim in em)

Fig 3.6 Bars 42-46 of third movement of the Woods sonata.

⁴ Jerry Bergonzi, *Pentatonics* (Rottenburg: Advance Music, 1994).

⁵ Please see the bibliography of jazz theory texts at the end of this document for more choices.

The improvisation happens right at the start and uses the blues scale as pitch material. This pitch collection has not been used in any of the preceding movements (unless the improvisations have contained it). Woods writes quarter note values with scoops for the blues scale material but indicates “bluesy & free & long”.⁶ This means that the performer has liberty of note duration but not of articulation or pitch.

In bar four, Woods provides slash notation with the instruction to “improvise using harmonics”. He does not provide fundamental pitches on which to place these harmonics as he did in the second movement. One could use the notes of the preceding blues scale for cohesion rather than using random pitches which would result in a more abstract approach.

The next place that improvisation is required is in mm. 108-109. Woods again supplies the same blues scale pitches, this time with no stems. Woods writes the instruction to use “growls and extreme harmonics”. In terms of rhythmic shapes the performer could use the quarter notes Woods used at the beginning or perhaps the more active eighth note lines found all through the movement. In bar 110, Woods writes “improvise overtones” over specific fundamentals.⁷ This can be approached like the improvisation in the second movement. This is the last improvisation of the sonata.

The last piece included in this study is perhaps the one that requires the performer to have the most extensive background in jazz theory. The *Sonata* by Bill Dobbins contains rather complicated harmonic contexts for improvisation. In two of the three movements, the improvisation shares the same harmonic construction as earlier or later

⁶ Please refer to chapter four for more information on scoops.

⁷ Please refer to the “General Saxophone Sources” in the Sources Consulted section for information on extended techniques.

sections of these movements. For performers who are not as comfortable with jazz improvisation, Dobbins indicates where these areas are and instructs that the performer may begin to improvise using the material in the corresponding sections of music.⁸

The pitch material in all of the movements is specifically prescribed by the chord symbols found in the improvised sections. All of the chord types and the scales associated with them appear in figure 3.7. Dobbins does not provide an explanation of

<u>Chord Type</u>	<u>Scale Choices</u>
Major over b9	Major with b9
Major 7	Major or Lydian
Major 7 over b7	Bebop (major with flat and natural 7th)
Major 7 with #5	Augmented (alternating half-step/minor third)
	Lydian Augmented (Lydian with #5)
	Relative harmonic minor
Major 7 with #5 over b3	Augmented Scale
Major 7 #11	Lydian
Minor 11	Minor or Dorian
Minor 7 over major 7th	Minor Bebop (minor with both flat and natural 7th)
	Dorian with both flat and natural 7th
Minor 9 over major 7th	same
Minor 11 with b 5	Melodic Minor on third of chord (also called Locrian #2)
	Locrian
Half-diminished b9	Locrian
Sus	Mixolydian or Dorian on 5 th ⁹
13 sus	same
7b5b9	Diminished scale (half-step/whole-step also known as octatonic)
	melodic minor on b9
7b9	Diminished scale
	melodic minor on b9
	harmonic major (major scale with b6)
13b9	same
aug7b9,aug7#9	melodic minor on b9
13#9	diminished scale
	melodic minor on b9
13#11	Lydian dominant (melodic minor on 5 th)

Fig. 3.7 Chord/Scale types found in the three movements of the Dobbins Sonata.

⁸ Dobbins indicates the matching areas but never indicates that the improvisation is optional.

⁹ These are the same collection of pitches but the Dorian on the 5th chord member takes the emphasis off the major third of the chord that clashes with the suspended 4th degree.

these chord/scale relationships in the score.¹⁰ This omission of information means that the performer must research the possibilities through an understanding of jazz theory. The rhythmic and melodic shapes of the “A” material in the first movement are distilled below in figure 3.8. The texture of the accompaniment in the saxophone improvisation remains the same as the “A” section material. As a result, the contours found in the “A” material will directly apply to the improvisation.



Fig. 3.8 Shapes in first movement (distilled) of the Dobbins sonata.

In the second movement, the improvisation functions as a development of the “A” section. The general contour found in bars 63-68 is shown in Figure 3.9 . These contours are those directly preceding the saxophone improvisation. The sixteenth note line seems to imply that Dobbins wishes the soloist to continue in a double-time feel as opposed to the relaxed rhythmic values of the initial melodic material. Because of this, the contours of the original melodic material may not apply as much in the improvisation; thus the

¹⁰ I have arrived at an understanding of these relationships for Phil Woods’s sonata and Bill Dobbins’s sonata through a study of jazz theory texts that can be found in the bibliography.



Fig. 3.9 Shapes in the transition into the saxophone improvisation of the second movement of the Dobbins sonata measures 64-68.

Improvisation functions as a variation over a passacaglia bass. The momentum of these lines is such that the performer must continue this momentum or gradually dissipate it before playing something different.

At the end of the improvised section, the soloist must merge the improvised lines into the lines that Dobbins has written. In the saxophone improvisation, this occurs in the middle of a measure that most likely has been set by the performers in double-time. The line that Dobbins writes is in the slower rhythmic values of the initial melodic material. At this point, if indeed they have chosen to play in double time, the performers must find a way to deconstruct the double-time feel that they have created to fit into the context of this line. To achieve this, the performers may benefit from studying the way that Dobbins creates a transition into the sixteenth-note lines of the composed sections in measures 63-68 (in other words reverse the process that occurred at the beginning of the solo). If the performers use this technique, which is basically a gradually spacing out of the active sixteenth lines into longer note values, the blending of sections may be more compositionally consistent with Dobbins' pacing.

The chord structure of the improvisation section in the third movement is actually less complicated than the first two movements. At the start of the saxophone

improvisation, the composer writes that the improviser should use the “half-step/whole-step dim. scale” (also known as the octatonic scale) over the first 24 bars. This section features only one chord, an A13#9 chord.¹¹ Right away Dobbins has indicated the eight pitches which he wishes to be used over the first 96 beats. This accounts for half of the entire saxophone solo. The second half contains chords unrelated to the opening material of the movement. The improvisation is the “B” material of the form as opposed to a variation of earlier material. This offers great freedom to the soloist, who is bound only to what is written in the chord symbols and the material in the piano part. The shapes in the piano accompaniment appear below in figure 3.10. At the end of the saxophone improvisation the soloist must blend the improvisation into a composed line that leads into the “A” material again. This effect can be achieved by making sure that the improvisation matches the velocity of the written line (eighth notes in mid-range of the saxophone).



Fig. 3.10 Piano rhythms (composite) in saxophone section of the Dobbins sonata third movement measures 35-36.

¹¹ Using the octatonic scale provides more altered notes than prescribed by this chord symbol.

CHAPTER FOUR: SPECIAL SAXOPHONE CONSIDERATIONS

This chapter deals with extended techniques and equipment choices available to the saxophonist for use in the pieces in this study. I will discuss the following categories relative to the needs of these pieces:

Mouthpiece and Reed Choice

When choosing a mouthpiece, there are several aspects to consider. One aspect is the issue of control. A classical mouthpiece is easier to play in tune than a more volatile jazz mouthpiece. The fundamental difference between the two types is the chamber size and the tip opening. The classical mouthpiece is more closed in both chamber and tip opening. This offers a warm, controlled sound when combined with a reed that is designed for that particular mouthpiece (usually a harder reed). The jazz mouthpiece has a larger bore and a larger tip opening. This results in a bright sound with great volume. This type of mouthpiece takes a softer reed.

I would recommend a mouthpiece that one can control at all dynamic ranges with flexibility. The performer should also be comfortable on the mouthpiece. One should not simply play the piece on a different setup without being used to it.¹ With any mouthpiece one has to spend a lot of time with a tuner (and/or different pitch generating sources) and experiment with different reeds. It is very possible to get a variety of colors and sounds using the setup that the performer is already comfortable with. Combining the existing setup with different reeds will yield more possibilities as well. Using an existing setup is especially useful when programming a crossover piece in the context of a recital that contains classical literature.

¹The setup refers to the combination of mouthpiece, reed and ligature.

Vibrato

One way to vary the sounds available with any setup is by varying vibrato. Vibrato is a very personal aspect of one's sound and some performers find it difficult to change it once it has been defined. Classical saxophone vibrato has traditionally been faster and more consistent than jazz vibrato. A jazz saxophonist tends to use a vibrato delay (playing a sustained tone with no vibrato and then adding it gradually, possibly at different rates of speed and/or depth). The vibrato found in the saxophone world is found at many different speeds within both classical and jazz contexts. I have a tendency to use different vibratos for different works regardless of its idiom. I recommend that the performer work toward mastering many different vibrato speeds, depths and rates of regularity.

Embouchure

The fundamental embouchure of classical saxophone is very different than that of jazz. In classical music the embouchure stays consistent (for the most part) in all ranges of the instrument. In jazz the embouchure changes relative to register. The jaw is lower in the lower range (resulting in subtone).² Jaw position changes as one moves into the higher ranges. The tongue is arched in classical playing and more flat (especially in the lower register) in jazz.³ Experimentation with this will result in some intonation

² Subtone cuts some of the upper partials out of the saxophone tone. The jaw placement used in subtone (lowered jaw) mutes some of the overtones.

³ To test tongue placement, mouthpiece alone pitches for classical saxophone are "c" for soprano, "a" for alto and "g" for tenor. Jazz pitch should be at least a minor third lower for each.

difficulty at first. The use of alternate fingerings in conjunction with these changes in embouchure may fix most of these problems.

Articulation

Articulation, both physical and notated, may be altered to achieve interesting musical results. In jazz, the tongue is sometimes “anchored” to the back of the lower teeth. This results in a legato articulation with a unique color. The beginning of this articulation is muted relative to classical legato. It is also generally true that jazz articulations tend to be longer across the gamut. This implies that the performer must be able to “re-calibrate” note lengths to achieve more possibilities in style.

In jazz, articulation patterns exist that are not notated but are nonetheless applied to certain lines. In rapid jazz passages, articulations are implemented in at least two ways. One option is to accent the highest notes in a line of matching rhythmic value. The second is ghosting (playing at a much softer dynamic level) notes that are not the accented notes. This requires the ability to make rapid dynamic changes without a change in quality of sound or intonation. This task is made more challenging by the fact that ghosting is called for in very rapid passages as well as slow ones.⁴ Writing these dynamic alterations in the score may be necessary at first. These articulation differences are merely possibilities available to the performer and not necessarily a prescription for all crossover pieces.

⁴ Ghosting and accenting the highest contour notes is what helps swing lines remain swung at fast tempos as opposed to relying on triplet or dotted eighth/sixteenth treatment of eighth notes.

Scoops and Slides

Scoops and slides traditionally differ in that scoops usually are performed with the embouchure only and a slide with embouchure and fingers (or just fingers). Like vibrato, the scoop can vary in speed and depth; it is really a slice of slow motion vibrato. These are notated throughout in Phil Woods's sonata and in one instance in Bill Dobbins's sonata. Besides learning how to execute the scoop and slide, performers must decide if they wish to use these tools in the pieces where they are not notated. As with the articulation patterns one may wish to write these in.

Alternate Fingerings

In the fourth movement of the Phil Woods sonata the composer prescribes alternation between different fingerings for the same pitch (also referred to as a timbre trill), which functions as an articulation. Some of these are possible only on certain notes.⁵ As a saxophonist, Woods uses this coloristic tool effectively. In terms of improvisation, the performer can also use this tool in the same way that Woods does (as a repeated articulation). Using this tool in the first or third movement improvisation might provide an interesting cohesion that would aid in unifying the whole sonata. In practicing these fingerings the performer must begin with the conventional fingering and then experiment with moving a finger to a key adjacent to one already depressed that does not change the pitch more than a quarter-step (the pitch must not change to something resembling a completely different pitch, only a timbrally inflected version of the same pitch).

⁵ In this case on middle C, B and Bb.

Slap-tounge

The slap-tongue effect called for in the last movement of Phil Woods' sonata bears some discussion. The definition of a slap-tongue varies from genre to genre and player to player. There are two basic types available. One sounds like a pizzicato on a string instrument. This articulation produces the same pitch that is fingered. Another slap-tongue variant is an explosive effect that does not yield the same pitch as the one fingered. Since Woods indicates specific pitches to be played, rather approximate ones, one can assume that he wants the first kind, unless the performer transposes the fingerings to achieve the written pitches (these transpositions vary from note to note and saxophone to saxophone).

Modern saxophone literature increasingly calls for mastery of different slap-type effects. The student should work on this difficult skill diligently as there do not seem to be many pedagogical sources available for the saxophonist. Acquiring this skill seems to be a personal process involving much trial and error before mastery. This is a similar process to the one required to learn altissimo (extreme higher register) playing on the saxophone discussed below.

Growling

Woods calls for a growling effect in his piece in the fourth movement. This can be achieved by either humming while playing or using a flutter articulation as a substitute. Flutter articulation can be achieved the same way one "rolls" the letter "R" in Spanish. Alternatively, a glottal flutter can be used which involves getting the glottis to oscillate. Mastering all of these requires trial and error to. The growl effect tends to be easier in the higher registers. The performer will need to experiment with different pitch

ranges to hum relative to where the saxophone is sounding. A good reference for the consistent use of this sound is the saxophonist Boots Randolph.

Overtone Study and Altissimo

Ulehla and Woods write altissimo register lines in their pieces. Woods indicates its use in the improvisation sections of his piece. The advanced student of saxophone will encounter altissimo playing quite frequently once higher grade literature is being studied. There is no fundamental difference in achieving altissimo on a classical setup versus a jazz setup. There is an inherent difference in the ease of execution on a mouthpiece with closed tip openings and one with a more open tip. There is also an ease of response in the altissimo register with harder reeds. Closed mouthpieces respond more easily with harder reeds and open mouthpieces with softer reeds. I have found that jazz mouthpieces allow altissimo notes to speak more easily.

The soprano saxophone player has more difficulty with altissimo playing because the fundamentals are so much higher. Saxophonists usually find altissimo playing easier on alto than on soprano. While extreme harmonics are quite easy to attain on the tenor saxophone, altissimo playing nearer to the written range of the instrument is quite difficult to master (more so than on alto saxophone). The problem is still worse on baritone saxophone.

Improvising in the altissimo register can be quite daunting as written altissimo lines in the literature tend to need more practice than the ones in the practical range of the instrument. Solving this problem is merely a matter of practicing scales that extend into the altissimo register. The more fluent the performer is doing this, the altissimo

register no longer feels out of the practical range. Another exercise that is useful in studying altissimo is the “bugle call” as outlined by pedagogue Larry Teal.⁶

The bugle call also will aid in achieving the effect that Woods calls for in the second and fourth movements of his piece. Woods wants alternation of overtones while fingering the low Bb, B and C. This is just like the altissimo exercise (while only going to a Bb, B and C above the staff instead of the whole altissimo range). If one wants to sound some of these partials at once as a multiphonic, there are some exercises that can help this. I recommend trying for the high partial by itself and gradually experimenting with tongue placement to fill in the partials to the lowest pitch (the fundamental). Using multiphonics in improvisation is of course a personal choice, but in the context of the pieces of this study I would use them only where directed (in the second movement as written and the end of the fourth as improvised).

⁶ Larry Teal, *The Art of the Saxophone* (Miami: Summy Birchard, 1963)

CHAPTER FIVE: REHEARSAL, PERFORMANCE AND EPILOGUE

The relationship between the collaborating musicians in a performance of any music is a delicate one. In the performance of crossover music, the relationship is further enhanced. In the composed sections of these pieces, the two performers must come to an agreement as to the stylistic approach in terms of tone and interpretation just as in any other piece of music. In the case of the pieces in this research, there are so many choices that depend on the background of the individual performer that a great variance in interpretation can be expected between the two performers. This fact may suggest that a more extensive pre-rehearsal dialogue between the performers take place. In this process the performers should discuss the general approach to the balance between the written and the unwritten (just as one might do in the case of a piece by Bach that lacks articulation, dynamic and specific tempo markings). The following set of questions may be helpful to ask of yourself and the collaborating performer.

- Where does the source material come from stylistically? Does it stem from a jazz style that not both of you are familiar with?
- Do both of you seem to have a clear understanding of the relationship between the composed and improvised sections?
- Do both performers have a different idea of what the chord/scale choices should be? If so, how important is it to you to have them match?

Once these questions have been addressed, the performers should consider rehearsal technique. There at least several approaches that could lead to the most desired rendition of the work. Some duos may choose to rehearse the composed sections at length and leave the improvisation largely alone until the performance, rehearsing the

chords and scales on their own. One could argue that this is in keeping with the absolute definition of spontaneous composition. Another approach may be to write out an improvisation and insert it into the piece and rehearse it as a part of the composed material, thus taking no chances at the performance. A third choice would be to rehearse the entire piece repeatedly, trying out different possibilities in the improvised sections and taking note of which ideas that work and which that do not. In this way the formal relationships are clear to the performers and the performance will still feature a spontaneous improvisation.

When practicing the composed parts alone, one can approach them like any other piece. The difficulty comes when dealing with the improvised section. The performer may choose to practice the composed sections and the improvisation sections separately. This way the performer can practice the chord/scale relationships and the patterns that they wish to use with them. It will make more sense to practice the piece as a whole once this has been mastered; the form becomes clear and the performer also can get used to what the endurance requirements of the piece will be.

The issue of how to program these pieces is an important one. I think it would be beneficial to see these pieces appear in classical saxophone recitals as well as jazz recitals. Some may decide to do a split recital where one half contains traditional literature and one half jazz. Where does this leave the crossover piece? Which half does it belong on? I think that one should use the same set of criteria for programming any recital. One should include variety of style and feature quality works that benefit the performer and the audience upon their performance.

In the case of the saxophone, it is extremely important to feature new works and new types of work written for the instrument. The repertoire is relatively young and the number of pieces written for saxophone is relatively small compared to the repertoire of other instruments. The body of literature is always in need of music of the quality and versatility that equals that of the instrument itself.

The results of this research illustrate a methodology of tackling a certain genre of music. The pieces in the study all have different properties in terms of style and content. What remains constant is the need for the performer to address the issue of improvisation. I think that the steps outlined in this document will aid in the performance of this type of music. The process is a general one that will hopefully be versatile enough to serve musicians through further evolution of the crossover genre.

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VITA

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