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Graduate recital in saxophone

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GRADUATE RECITAL IN SAXOPHONE

A Recital Abstract

Submitted

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Music in Saxophone Performance

Cehuai Zhang

University of Northern Iowa

May 2017

This Study by: Cehuai Zhang

Entitled: Graduate Recital in Saxophone

has been approved as meeting the thesis requirement for the
Degree of Master of Music

Date

Dr. Ann Bradfield, Chair, Thesis Committee

Date

Dr. Amanda McCandless, Thesis Committee Member

Date

Dr. Heather Peyton, Thesis Committee Member

Date

Dr. Kavita R. Dhanwada, Dean, Graduate College

This Recital Performance by: Cehuai Zhang

Entitled: Graduate Recital in Saxophone

Date of Recital: Thursday, March 2, 2017

has been approved as meeting the recital requirement for the
Degree of Master of Music

Date

Dr. Ann Bradfield, Chair, Recital Committee

Date

Dr. Amanda McCandless, Recital Committee Member

Date

Dr. Heather Peyton, Recital Committee Member

Date

Dr. Kavita R. Dhanwada, Dean, Graduate College

ABSTRACT

Cehuai Zhang performed his graduate recital on Thursday, March 2, 2017 at 8:00 p.m. in Davis Hall at the Gallagher-Bluedorn Performing Arts Center on the campus of the University of Northern Iowa. This recital was given in partial fulfillment of the requirement for his Master of Music degree, with an emphasis in saxophone performance. The recital program consisted of *Concertino da Camera* for alto saxophone and eleven instruments (transcribed for piano) by Jacques Ibert, *Mai* for alto saxophone solo by Ryo Noda, *Fantaisie Sur un Theme Original* for alto saxophone and piano by Jules Demersseman, and *Buku* for saxophone solo and soundtrack by Jacob Ter Veldhuis. Mr. Zhang collaborated with Dr. Robin Guy, faculty pianist at the University of Northern Iowa, on the pieces by Ibert and Demersseman.

Jacques Ibert: *Concertino da Camera for Alto Saxophone and Eleven Instruments*

Jacques Ibert (1890-1962) was a universally admired composer of the early twentieth-century, and he also was considered “one of the most ‘complete of French composers’.”¹ He was a prolific composer, writing music in many different genres including opera, ballet, orchestral, chamber music, vocal music, and solo instrumental music. Ibert employed the saxophone in several of his orchestral compositions.

¹ Thomas Liley, “A Teacher’s Guide to the Interpretation of Selected Music for Saxophone” (PhD diss., Indiana University, 1988), 108.

Concertino da Camera was composed in 1935 and dedicated to German-American saxophonist Sigurd Rascher. It was premiered on December 11, 1935 in Winterthur, Switzerland.² After its first performance, Rascher performed it frequently in Europe and America with different orchestras and conductors. In this specific work, Ibert employed impressionism, neo-classicism, and other prevailing music styles of that time.

This work was composed for alto saxophone and eleven instruments which include flute, oboe, clarinet, bassoon, horn, trumpet, violin, viola, cello, and double bass.³ The first movement is marked *Allegro con moto* and is in enlarged ternary form, ABBA, with an introduction and a coda. The tonal center of this movement is C major. Theme I of this movement is presented in m. 9 by the saxophone. This theme is in a four-measure phrase and is powerful, with constant dynamic changes, leaps, and stepwise motion. The slur from eighth-notes to the sixteenth-notes of the next beat produces a uneven feeling, which is an interesting rhythmic feature. According to Liley's research, it could be considered "a reflection of the general interest of French composers of the 1920s and 1930s in American jazz."⁴ Theme I repeats at m. 17, except for the last two measures. The A section ends with the strings playing the first theme as a transition at m. 51, and then at m. 61 the trumpet plays an ending phrase, followed by the horn playing the same

² Ibid, 111.

³ Ibid, 113.

⁴ Ibid, 116.

material. The material is passed to the saxophone and starts the B section.

Theme II uses contrasting material and characterized by a slower harmonic rhythm than Theme I. The melody is lyrical and singable. The fast-moving sixteenth-notes from mm. 95 to 116 lead to the climax of Section B, followed by the theme in the strings from m. 122 coupled with the saxophone playing fast sixteenth-notes. The B section concludes with a coda in m. 154, which features a staccato chromatic scale with an extreme decrescendo. Then, section A is repeated entirely by the saxophone in m. 190. The codetta section starts at m. 234, in which the saxophone plays the material of the introduction and then ends the movement with two powerful eighth-notes.

The second movement is marked *Larghetto*, which is a slow and lyrical movement. It is through-composed and based on a tonal center of E-major with non-functional harmony. The beginning of the movement is marked *Quasi recitativo*, which is an unaccompanied section that is ten measures. The orchestra enters at m. 11 by playing an E minor chord with a flat eleventh, which is a typical chord used in impressionism. The orchestra takes over from the saxophone at m. 33 and presents additional material, bringing the movement to a climax. The saxophone reenters at m.50 with a very soft dynamic level, and brings the movement to an end.

The third movement is marked *Animato molto* and starts immediately after the second movement without any rest. This movement is in sonata-allegro form. The first

theme is presented by the strings in A major, and the saxophone enters in m. 9 with the same material. The contrasting second theme is presented at m. 25 by the saxophone and repeated with slight revision at m. 31. It is characterized by slower harmonic rhythm than the first theme. The transition starts at m. 68 where the saxophone focuses on A and finally shifts to G-sharp, leading to the development section, which is the same motion as the beginning of the second movement.

The development section starts at m. 82 in E minor, first presented by orchestra and followed by the saxophone at m. 95. At the end of the development section, a chromatic transformation of the first theme is played by the saxophone, which brings the movement to a cadenza that is based on the intervals of the octatonic scale. The recapitulation starts at m. 149, during which the first theme in A major is presented by the saxophone and is then taken over by the orchestra at m. 157. The second theme is presented at m. 170, followed by the coda at m. 202, using material from the second theme. Finally, the movement ends at m. 217 by using syncopation and material from the first theme.

Jules Demersseman: *Fantaisie sur un Theme Original for Alto Saxophone and Piano*

Jules Demersseman (1833-1866) was born in Hondshoote, France. He began to study flute at the Paris Conservatory when he was eleven years old.⁵ He received a series

⁵ Jules Demersseman, *Fantaisie Sur un Theme Original* (Marquette, Michigan: Resolute Music Publications, 2013).

of prizes from Paris Conservatory and became a teacher, soloist, and composer after he graduated. Demersseman started to compose saxophone music after becoming friends with Adolphe Sax, the inventor of the saxophone.⁶ Also, his compositions for saxophone have been highly regarded throughout the saxophone history, and are often selected as contest pieces at competitions all over the world. The *Fantaisie Sur un Theme Original* was composed in 1862 and dedicated to Demersseman's friend Henri Wuille, who was an early concert saxophonist in Europe and the United States.⁷ In general, this work reflects Demersseman's musical style, which is characterized by tonal, chromatic motion, and virtuosic techniques.

Fantaisie Sur un Theme Original is based on theme and variation form. It consists of an introduction, a cadenza, a theme, four variations, and a finale. The tonal center of this work is G major, and its harmonic progression follows traditional tonal music practice. The introduction is marked *Allegro* in G-minor, and the first theme is presented by the piano, followed by the saxophone at m. 15. Notably, melodies in the saxophone are lyrical and expressive, which shows Demersseman's understanding of the saxophone as a melodic instrument capable of conveying deep emotion.⁸ A contrasting section with a fast-moving chromatic sequence takes over in mm. 36-39. Using the chromatic scale is a

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Abraham Albertus de Villiers, "The Development of the Saxophone 1850-1950: its Influence on Performance and the Classical Repertory" (PhD diss., University of Pretoria, 2014), 29.

hallmark of Demersseman's music, and this practice can be found in his flute solo pieces and another saxophone work, *Carnival de Venice*. In addition, this shows that Demersseman thought the saxophone could execute virtuosic techniques similar to the flute.

The cadenza shows Demersseman's exploration of the technical possibilities of saxophone, the first of which is extreme dynamic change. This is demonstrated in mm. 44-50 with dynamic change from pianissimo to fortissimo, with an ending in pianissimo in m. 51. The second example of challenging technique is the double-tonguing after the high E-flat at the same measure, and the third example of challenging technique occurs when Demersseman employs high F-sharp at the end of m. 51. Unlike the modern saxophone, it was difficult to achieve high F-sharp on the old Adolphe-saxophone that existed at the time the piece was written.

After a short transition at the end of the cadenza, the theme marked *Andantino* is presented. This theme is in G major and characterized by a lyrical and expressive melody with slow-moving harmonic rhythm and frequent secondary-dominant chords. The first variation after the theme features fast-moving sixteenth-notes, which indicate that prodigious technique is required from the saxophonist. In addition to finger technique, tonguing technique is also important in mm. 93 and 110. The chromatic motion found in this section is similar to mm. 36-39 of the introduction, and the transition between the

first and second variation is similar to the second-half of the cadenza. Following this transition, Demersseman presents the second variation from mm. 103 to 110, which is a repeat of the first variation. Then, the saxophone enters at m. 120 after a short transition played by the piano, slowing down the tempo to connect with the slower third variation marked *Andante* in 9/8 meter. The third variation features a slow tempo and lyrical melody, creating a contrast after two passionate variations. The fourth variation is marked *Piu Vivo* and presented immediately after the third section. This variation serves as a bridge to the final section.

At the end of the fourth variation, the final section is presented after a sustained D, the dominant pedal tone in G major. It is characterized by thirty-second notes with frequent accents that emphasize the first note. It ends with five quarter-notes on G to emphasize the tonal center. This section is the most challenging part of this piece. Because of the highly virtuosic techniques used in the piece, it helped the composer earn a higher reputation in saxophone history.

Ryo Noda: *Mai for Alto Saxophone Solo*

Ryo Noda (b. 1948) is a Japanese composer and has been hailed throughout the Western hemisphere for his perfect control, powerful avant-garde improvisations and

innovative playing techniques.⁹ He studied at the Osaka College of Music as a saxophonist. Then, he continued his career at Northwestern University under Fred Hemke, and at the Bordeaux Conservatory under Jean Marie Londeix.¹⁰ While he is a leading composer of new Japanese music for the saxophone, his repertoire also includes Western music written in the style of the baroque, classical and romantic periods. *Mai* was composed in 1975 and dedicated to French saxophonist, Jean Marie Londeix. This work was inspired by traditional Japanese Shakuhachi music and uses extended saxophone techniques to imitate the sounds from Shakuhachi. The text Noda gave at the first page of the music says:

Mai, The Battle of the sea. At twilight one night in Autumn, while the moon reflected its silver light on the surface of the waves, General Kyotsun plays his flute. Standing at the prow of the ship, he seizes his sword and cuts the plate which goes down to his feet and disappears into the sea. On his doorstep the phantom of the Samural appeared. Facing him his wife asks his “Why did you go?” “To save my army” he replied, “because I knew the battle was lost in advance and I also saved the lives of my men and their families.” “And me,” she said. “Did you think about me?”¹¹

This work is a contemporary composition that combines the sounds of a Western instrument with Japanese musical instrument characteristics. The characteristics of the traditional Japanese instruments, such as Koto, a Japanese zither with 13 silk strings, or the Shakuhachi, a bamboo wind instrument (flute) with five finger holes, are embodied in this

⁹ Brian Trittin, “Annotated Bibliography of Unaccompanied Alto Saxophone Literature” (PhD diss., University of Arizona, 1993), 40.

¹⁰ Ryo Noda, *Mai* (Paris: Alphonse Leduc, 1975), cover.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 1. Transcribed by Jean Leduc as recited by Ryo Noda

piece. The Koto is a traditional string instrument sounded by plucking the strings with picks on the right hand, and pressing down on the strings with the fingers of the left hand.¹² When the string is plucked, the pitch is bent. Also, the "Japanese cutting tone," a very short sound with accent is created when the strings are plucked very hard. These distinctive sounds from traditional Koto are indicated in the piece and performers need to use specific techniques on saxophone to create them. In addition, the Koto was not always played with vibrato, therefore, saxophonists should use vibrato thoughtfully.

The features of another famous traditional Japanese instrument, called Shakuhachi, are also quoted in this piece. Sakuhachi is a woodwind instrument originally derived from China. It has four finger holes on the front and one on the back and employs a three-octave range.¹³ The most prominent characteristics of the Shakuhachi are pitch bending and exaggerated leaps. To capture this effect in *Mai*, some quarter tones are created, requiring the saxophonist to use specific fingerings and voicing techniques to play these notes. Also, wide leaps from low B-flat to altissimo C are employed which require the performer to move their fingers quickly.

In order to reflect the traditional Japanese music, the composition is notated as unmeasured throughout. The traditional notes and contemporary markings indicate glissandos, multiphonics, and quarter tones. The composer gives the markings a concise and

¹² Trittin, 41.

¹³ Ibid.

clear definition on the last page of the score. Tempo markings are indicated, but there is not a steady beat in the composition. As mentioned above, some advanced techniques are employed in order to imitate the sounds of the Koto and the Shakuhachi, including multiphonics, pitch bending, altissimo, the Japanese cutting tone and portamento.

The piece is centered on the pitch B-natural, and the form of this piece is A-B-A' even though traditional Japanese music is through-composed. The outer sections are slower paced and comprised primarily of pitch bending. In contrast, the B section features fast-moving notes, distinctive trills, and extreme dynamic changes. At the end of the section, a crescendo passage with faster notes and trills culminates into the climax. The A section is centered on B-natural while the recapitulation A' is centered on E-natural, a perfect fifth lower. The piece finally ends on altissimo B-natural with exaggerated vibrato. The pitch bending and trills serve not only as challenging technique for the performer, but also as the structural motives for the piece.

Jacob Ter Veldhuis: *Buku for Alto Saxophone and Soundtrack*

Jacob Ter Veldhuis (b. 1951) is considered a Dutch “Avant-pop” composer.¹⁴ He started as a rock musician and studied composition and electronic music at the Groningen Conservatory. He is famous because of his melodious compositions, which are straight

¹⁴ Jacob Ter Veldhuis, *Buku* (Doorn, Netherlands: Boombox Music Publishers, 2006), 4.

from the heart and create great effect. He says, “I pepper my music with sugar”¹⁵

Buku was composed in the Spring of 2006 and dedicated to Dutch saxophonist Arno Bornkamp. The title of the piece was inspired by Charlie Parker’s description of Dizzy Gillespie in an interview by Paul Desmond. In the interview, Charlie Parker said he preferred Gillespie to play “Buku.”¹⁶ No one seems to know to what Parker meant. The composer himself thought that Parker may be referring to the French word “beaucoup,” which means “a lot” in English.¹⁷ *Buku* is about the soul of the alto saxophone and a tribute to three alto giants: Charlie Parker, Cannonball Adderley, and Art Pepper.

This piece is through-composed and all phrases are inspired by the performances from the three jazz alto saxophonists mentioned above. The saxophone soloist plays along with the fixed media—presumably produced by a sampler instrument—which repeats one beat behind what the soloist plays. The other instruments heard on the media are a bass and a drum, which is common in a traditional jazz ensemble setting. As mentioned above, all materials heard in the media came from Charlie Parker, Cannonball Adderley, and Art Pepper. At the beginning of the piece, the composer used the syllables “I,” “don’t,” and “mem” as beats 1, 2, and 3 of the second measure, and the saxophone plays the same pitches as the voice.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid., 3.

¹⁷ Ibid.

With its roots in jazz, one might expect to see traditionally swung eighth notes in the score, but the composer did not include them, likely because it is difficult to play swing eighth notes accurately with a fixed media accompaniment. Several times, the saxophone soloist plays simultaneously with the samples. Therefore, the composer used exact rhythmic patterns such as an eighth-note followed by a sixteenth note, or a dotted sixteenth-note with a thirty-second note to create the swing feeling. In addition, frequent meter changes between $3/4$, $7/8$, $7/16$, and $9/16$ are also used to help creating this specific feeling. Also, other jazz elements such as growling, scooping, and exaggerated vibratos are included.

This graduate recital included several important works from the solo saxophone repertoire, collectively demonstrating the saxophonist's skills in musical expression as well as technical ability. The styles and genres varied greatly, and allowed the performer to demonstrate an understanding and awareness of appropriate interpretation and expression for each work. This understanding and awareness is the culmination of the study for the Master of Music degree.

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School of Music
University of Northern Iowa

presents

Cehuai Zhang, Saxophone

In a Graduate Recital

assisted by:

Dr. Robin Guy, piano

In partial fulfillment of the requirement
for the MM degree in Saxophone Performance
From the Studio of Ann Bradfield

Fantaisie sur un Theme Original..... Jules Demersseman
(1833-1866)

Dr. Robin Guy, Piano

Mai..... Ryo Noda
(b. 1948)

INTERMISSION

Concertino da Camera..... Jacques Ibert
(1890-1962)

I. Allegro con moto

II. Larghetto- Animato molto

Dr. Robin Guy, Piano

Buku..... Jacob Ter Veldhuis
(b. 1951)