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Jacob Brandenburg master of music recital abstract

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JACOB BRANDENBURG MASTER OF MUSIC

RECITAL ABSTRACT

An Abstract

Submitted

in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Music

Jacob Brandenburg

University of Northern Iowa

May 2021

This Study by: Jacob Brandenburg

Entitled: Jacob Brandenburg Master of Music Recital Abstract

has been approved as meeting the thesis requirement for the

Degree of Master of Music

Date

Dr. Ann Bradfield, Chair, Recital Committee

Date

Dr. Amanda McCandless, Recital Committee Member

Date

Dr. Hannah Porter Occeña, Recital Committee Member

Date

Dr. Jennifer Waldron, Dean, Graduate College

This Recital Performance by: Jacob Brandenburg

Entitled: Jacob Brandenburg Master of Music Recital

Date of Recital: March 26, 2021

has been approved as meeting the thesis requirement for the

Degree of Master of Music

Date

Dr. Ann Bradfield, Chair, Recital Committee

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Dr. Amanda McCandless, Recital Committee Member

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Dr. Hannah Porter Occeña, Recital Committee Member

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Dr. Jennifer Waldron, Dean, Graduate College

ABSTRACT

This recital abstract serves as supplemental material to the Master of Music degree recital by Jacob Brandenburg. The recital will take place on March 26, 2021, at 8:00 p.m. Central Standard Time in Bengtson Auditorium at the University of Northern Iowa. Works by composers Paul Hindemith, Ida Gotkovsky, Daniel Asia, and Joan Tower will be performed. Performers Andrea Verburg and Dr. Robin Guy will collaborate with Brandenburg for this recital. In addition to providing musical and historical context, this document will address specific considerations regarding performance practice for each piece.

Konzerstück für Zwei Altsaxophone (1933) by Paul Hindemith

Paul Hindemith was born near Frankfurt, Germany in 1895. He began learning violin at a young age and was later admitted to Dr. Hoch's Konservatorium Musikakademie, where he studied composition and conducting with Arnold Mendelssohn and Bernhard Sekles. He was drafted for military service during World War I and assigned to his regiment's band. During this time, Hindemith managed to continue composing and even formed a string quartet.

Prior to World War II, Hindemith's compositions attracted negative attention from the Nazi party and were banned by the party in 1938. Hindemith had moved to Switzerland in 1938 and immigrated to the United States in 1940 to escape the war. Once in the US, Hindemith lectured at several universities until he was offered a Visiting Professorship at Yale University.¹

1. Schubert, "Hindemith, Paul."

Hindemith's *Konzerstück für Zwei Altsaxophone* was completed in 1933. The work was commissioned by Sigurd Raschér, a German-born saxophonist who, like Hindemith, later immigrated to the United States. At this time in the saxophone's development there were few original works for the instrument. Raschér attempted to remedy this by commissioning new works. He first commissioned *Concerto for Alto Saxophone and Orchestra*, Op. 6, by Edmund von Borck in 1932 and after the success of this piece, Raschér approached Hindemith to request a new work for saxophone. The resulting piece was *Konzerstück für Zwei Altsaxophone*, translates to "Concert Piece," a title typically assigned to works for solo instrument and orchestra. These earlier works were typically shorter, single movement pieces intended to be performed in concert, as the name suggests. Hindemith's *Konzerstück für Zwei Altsaxophone* is in three movements. The movements are to be played without pause mirroring the original intention of the genre. In Hindemith's work the movements each provide a new character and tempo which could be thought of as subsections.

A successful interpretation of the piece depends on an understanding of Hindemith's compositional approach. Shortly after composing *Konzerstück*, Hindemith published several volumes detailing his compositional style titled, *The Craft of Musical Composition*. The first volume in this series goes into great detail about the roots of his ideas and his theory of harmony and melody. Though most of the text draws examples from works with more than two voices, there are ideas that apply to a duet. For example, Hindemith explains that if a single tone is perceived as the root of a chord, then the remaining notes of the twelve-tone series create different levels of tension when

compared to the primary note. Hindemith details the resulting tension created when two notes are played in close proximity, including observations of inversions and compiles this information into a concise graph.²

Hindemith's intricate treatment of intervals helps to drive the tension and release when only two voices are present. Hindemith pays special attention to the intervals of a second, seventh, and tritone and suggests that the note we hear as the "root" depends on the size of the intervals. In *Konzerstück*, Hindemith liberally returns to these intervals. These are often utilized in passages with unison rhythm, accentuating the dissonance created by these intervals.

Figure 1. *Konzerstück*, movement 1, measures 27-28.



With just two voices present, the note perceived as the root can be ambiguous. However, if the performers understand Hindemith's philosophy regarding the perception of the root, they can infer the primary tone and treat the other part as a supporting role.³ In Figure 1 the supporting role is the lower of the two voices which switches parts halfway through.

2. Hindemith, *The Craft of Musical Composition*, 57-63.

3. *Ibid*, 79-83.

The dissonance created relates to the lower note so initially the interval heard is a minor seventh. When the parts switch roles the dissonance becomes a major ninth.

This tension and release created via intervals directly impacts the created harmony of a piece. Hindemith states that harmony is tied to melodic movement and describes how it takes place over an external time period.⁴ Though a traditional understanding of harmony usually relies on more than two voices, Hindemith offers thoughts on a two-voice framework, which can be applied to *Konzerstück*. He states, “[T]he framework is constructed by the bass voice and the most important of the upper voices.”⁵ The role of the bass voice is to be melodic in character, as is the case with most contrapuntal writing.

Figure 2. *Konzerstück*, movement 1, measures 18-21.



The bass voice provides the foundation of the harmony and often is traded between players in *Konzerstück*. The foundation is not always the perceived root, as this may

4. Hindemith, *The Craft of Musical Composition*, 82.
5. *Ibid.*, 113-115.

change based on the interval. The lower note provides a glimpse of the decisive, important development of Hindemith's harmony.

Other performance considerations stem from the written directions found in the score. No tempos are given, but the character associated with each movement indicates an approach to tempo and style. The first movement is marked "*Lebhaft*," which indicates it should be played in a lively manner. Lively suggests a faster tempo, and contemporary performances are typically around quarter note equals 100-112 bpm. The character marking also informs the performer that articulations should be light and lifted near the ends of phrases. The two voices create interjections and frequently trade roles, creating an almost conversational flow and direction in the movement.⁶

Brilliance pour saxophone alto et piano (1974) by Ida Gotkovsky

Ida Gotkovsky was born in Calais, France in 1933, into a musical family; both of her parents were violinist, and her siblings were an accomplished violinist and pianist. She went on to study at the Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique in Paris, where she studied with Olivier Messiaen and Nadia Boulanger. Her compositional output includes chamber, symphonic, instrumental, and vocal music.

These works have received numerous awards including Prix Blumenthal (1958), Prix Padeloup (1959), Prix de Composition Concours International de Divonne les Bains (1961), Médaille de la Ville de Paris (1963), Grand Prix de la Ville de Paris (1966), and Prix Lily Boulanger (1967).⁷

6. Hindemith, *Konzerstück*, 1-4.

7. Surman, "Gotkovsky, Ida."

Gotkovsky is a prolific composer, and her instrumental music output is monumental. When regarding this body of work, it is important to view it as a whole rather than as segmented, individual works. Steven K. Hunter argues in his D.M.A. dissertation that Gotkovsky’s instrumental works can be linked by the ideas of borrowing and intertextuality. Included in this list of works is *Brillance pour saxophone alto et piano* (1974). Like Gotkovsky’s other instrumental works, *Brillance* employs self-borrowing, a technique in which a composer recycles thematic material while developing melodies and changing harmonies throughout a piece.⁸ Within *Brillance*, Gotkovsky borrows heavily from her own motives in the piece. The most distinct use is found at the beginning of movement I “Déclamé.” Gotkovsky develops an original motive beginning in the first measure and lasting until measure three, beat three, which is then revisited in different contexts throughout the movement.

Figure 3. *Brillance*, movement 1, measures 1-4.



Each time Gotkovsky references the original motive, she alters it in some way. The next iteration of the motive follows immediately after the first, beginning on beat four in measure three. The metric placement is the same, but now the intervals are different, the

8. Hunter, “The Instrumental Music of Ida Gotkovsky,” 3-4.

motive is fragmented, and the end of the second iteration augments the rhythm found in the initial motive.⁹ This technique is present throughout the work.

The concept of intertextuality focuses on the listener and their perception of the meaning of a piece. The term originates from literature in the 1960s and was adopted by musicologists in the 1980s. In music, the term considers the listener's reaction rather than the composer's intent, meaning that the music does not have a single, "correct" meaning, nor does it rely on an understanding of theory. Instead, musical perception relies on understanding music through observation and past interpretation.¹⁰ An informed listener, familiar with a composer's body of works, can realize the potential meaning of a piece through a combination of familiar musical gesture and perspective.

The aforementioned techniques provide a role for the composer and the listener. However, the performer is left out of the process. Hunter proposes that familiarity with both intertextuality and self-borrowing informs the performer, allowing them to present an educated performance. Awareness of self-borrowing in Gotkovsky's music grants players the ability to recognize her compositional language and its application in different settings.¹¹ Intertextuality reminds performers that the initial iterations of musical gestures drive the listeners' expectations and perception later in the work. Gotkovsky's directions are explicit and help steer the performer toward her intended goal. This provides a framework for the audience, allowing them to gauge their expectations for the rest of the piece.

9. Gotkovsky, *Brilliance*, 2-5.

10. Hunter, "The Instrumental Music of Ida Gotkovsky," 6-9.

11. *Ibid*, 3-4.

Perhaps the most overt example of intertextuality in *Brilliance* is in the fourth movement. By this point, the audience has experienced several motives and characters. The fourth movement, “Final,” culminates the previous three movements by extensively borrowing material. The movement is divided into four distinct sections, each reminiscent of a previous movement. As an example, the section beginning at letter E marks the beginning of the second section. Here Gotkovsky borrows from movement two, “Desinvolte.” Eighth-note triplet rhythms in mixed meters define this section with heavily accented downbeats followed by staccato eighth notes driving the constant, spirited tempo.¹²

Figure 4. *Brilliance*, movement 4, measures 31-33.



Upon hearing this, an active listener would recognize the connection to movement two, even with variation. An informed performer can make those connections to earlier movements apparent and smooth. The role of the performer is to anticipate the audience’s reaction and make adjustments according to the composer’s intent. This will help deliver an informed, goal-oriented performance.

12. Gotkovsky, *Brilliance*, 17-18.

The Alex Set by Daniel Asia

Daniel Asia was born in Seattle, Washington in 1953. During his studies at Hampshire College and then Yale School of Music, Asia worked with teachers Randall McClellan, Jacob Druckman, Stephen Albert, Gunther Schuller, and Isang Yun. Asia's works range from solo pieces to large-scale orchestral works. In 1986-1988, Asia was awarded the prestigious UK Fulbright Arts Fellowship and Guggenheim Fellowship, allowing him to work in London as a visiting lecturer. He is presently Professor of Composition and head of the composition department at The University of Arizona Fred Fox School of Music, Tucson.¹³

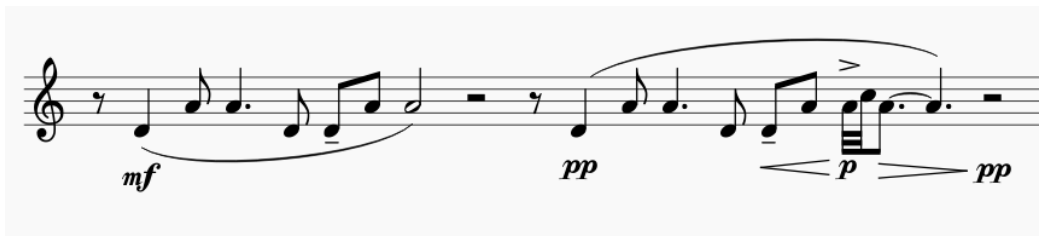
Aside from program notes, little scholarly work has been published on Asia's *The Alex Set* for Solo Oboe or Saxophone.

The following observations originate from correspondence with the composer. The initial *Alex* was written in 1971 as part of a composition assignment from Asia's undergraduate professor Randall McClellan. The goal of the assignment was to use as few notes as possible, only adding notes once deemed appropriate.¹⁴ Asia accomplished this task using a rising fifth interval, D to A, and a rising minor third, A to C. Small embellishments were made to this formula in terms of rhythm, dynamics, and relative octave.

13. Chute, "Asia, Daniel."

14. Asia, *The Alex Set*, 11.

Figure 5. *The Alex Set*, movement 1, opening.



The first new pitch enters when an E is played at the end of line two. This could be viewed as an extension of the intervals used at the beginning of the piece. E is a fifth above A and G is given as another minor third above E. The alterations made throughout the first movement are careful considerations that embellish the opening motive.¹⁵

By pure coincidence, Asia met oboist Alex Klein a few years later at Oberlin Conservatory. Klein enjoyed the initial *Alex* and performed it there. Nearly twenty-five years of friendship later in 1995, Klein suggested that Asia write more for oboe, perhaps expanding on *Alex*. Initially Asia hesitated, remarking that his style had changed considerably since 1971. Nonetheless, Asia embarked on the daunting task. When asked about the difficulties he encountered, Asia remarked, “At that young age I did not have the insight to develop or tap into the implications of the initial *Alex*. I had now gained the knowledge to expand upon these with new modes of expression. The initial *Alex* appeared pregnant with possibilities.”¹⁶ Asia approached *Alex II* and *III* with an expanded compositional vocabulary allowing for new extensions and realizations that would not have been possible in the initial *Alex*.

15. Asia, *The Alex Set*, 1-2.

16. Daniel Asia, phone conversation with author, March 1, 2021.

The second and third movements of *The Alex Set* and their proceeding interludes are treated as variations on the initial *Alex*. Using this as a starting point, the remainder of the piece makes various alterations to rhythm, pitch, and register. In terms of register, the range of the initial *Alex* is exactly two octaves from written D3 to D5. The third movement expands this considerably to nearly three octaves from Bb2 to A5.¹⁷

Several aspects of the music remain consistent throughout the work. The idea of pitch centricity, or returning to a specific pitch, is central to each movement. The relation between D and A as stated in the opening is present throughout. As more alterations are made, Asia ventures further from these pitches but inevitably returns to them and frames the work with them again.¹⁸

Dynamics are used carefully as a means of “opening up” old materials. Asia states that this is one of his main modes of transforming sound.¹⁹ Quick bursts of energy accelerate the piece to forte, only to suddenly diminish back to piano.

Figure 6. *The Alex Set*, movement 2, measures 13-25.

The musical score for Figure 6 shows two staves of music in 2/4 time. The first staff begins at measure 5 and ends at measure 12. It features a sequence of eighth and quarter notes with various dynamics: piano (p) at the start, forte (f) in the middle, and piano (p) towards the end. The second staff begins at measure 13 and ends at measure 25. It continues the melodic line with dynamics including mezzo-forte (mf) and forte (f). The notation includes slurs, accents, and dynamic markings.

17. Asia, *The Alex Set*, 1-10.

18. Daniel Asia, phone conversation with author, March 1, 2021.

19. Ibid.

Astute awareness is needed for the performer to execute these shifts with the rapidity Asia demands. As the piece opens, it helps to chart the contour of dynamics. This can be applied to individual phrases, an entire movement, or the whole work. By analyzing the adjustments, informed performers can plan the direction of each of these divisions. Asia closed his thoughts on *The Alex Set* by stating that the variations move into a state of near improvisation, albeit controlled improvisation.²⁰ The gestures of dynamic, rhythmic, and register changes allude to a jazz solo embellishing on preexisting material.

Second Flight (2018) by Joan Tower

Joan Tower was born in New Rochelle, New York, on September 6, 1938, and she began her musical studies as a piano player at age four. At nine years old, Tower moved to Bolivia where she encountered new rhythms that would later be integral to her works.

Tower attended Bennington College and eventually completed her studies at Columbia University. Her compositional output has made lasting contributions to contemporary music in the United States garnering her prestigious awards including a Grammy for best contemporary classical composition and a Guggenheim fellowship.²¹

Second Flight (2017) for solo alto saxophone is Tower's sequel to *Wings* (1981) for Clarinet, which was transcribed for saxophone. *Second Flight* was co-commissioned by 50 saxophonists organized by Ken Radnofsky, founder of The World-Wide Concurrent Premieres and Commissioning Fund. Tower herself called *Second Flight* a

20. Daniel Asia, phone conversation with author, March 1, 2021.

21. Grolman, "Tower, Joan."

sequel to *Wings*, and the title itself draws upon the same imagery of a bird for inspiration.²²

Tower further describes the imagery as, “a large bird—perhaps a falcon—at times flying very high gliding along the thermal currents, barely moving. At other moments, the bird goes into elaborate flight patterns that loop around, diving downwards, gaining tremendous speeds.”²³ Using this visual as a reference, the performer can make educated musical decisions. For instance, in the opening section starting at measure one, the saxophone sustains several pitches. These pitches descend chromatically and vary in length. Aside from some grace note-like figures preceding the long notes, the trajectory resembles the gliding bird Tower referenced. The dynamic is pianissimo for the first four measures, alluding to a bird suspended by the currents, hardly moving.²⁴

Figure 7. *Second Flight*, measures 1-4.



In addition, Tower makes no indication if the performer should utilize vibrato during this section, leaving that to the performer’s discretion. Omitting vibrato at the start

22. Tower, *Wings*, program notes.

23. Ibid.

24. Tower, *Second Flight*, 1.

complements the stillness created by the written music. As the music intensifies, both in dynamics and tempo, vibrato can be slowly added in to match the character. Connections to the second half of Tower's statement regarding elaborate flight patterns can be observed later in the piece.

Several passages behave like the elaborate flight patterns Tower mentions. The most obvious is the "looping" pattern. Tower uses repetition throughout *Second Flight* to indicate looping behavior. Not only does Tower gyrate around a specific pitch, like C# at the top of page two, she also repeats old material. On page five, line two, Tower returns to the gyrating material from page two.

Figure 8. *Second Flight*, measures 119-120.



The contour of the line remains the same as the first statement, while Tower adds repeated notes and removes slurs.²⁵

Judy Lochhead takes this analysis a step further in her article titled, "Joan Tower's *Wings* and *Breakfast Rhythms I and II*: Some Thoughts on Form and Repetition," published in *Perspectives of New Music*. As part of a broader discussion on musical form, Lochhead approaches the repetition in *Wings* as a formal signifier. Rather than restricting

25. Tower, *Second Flight*, 2-5.

a piece to formal definitions that may or may not fit, Lochhead suggests musicologists adopt language that supports non-standard forms.²⁶ In Tower's pieces, repetition is perceived from a temporal level. The first iteration of a repeated figure is future directed, indicating an upcoming event. Whether the repetition comes to fruition is up to the composer.

In Tower's pieces, when repetition does occur it allows for comparison between an event "now" and one that occurred "before."²⁷ Therefore, rather than constraining *Second Flight*, repetition allows for formal function created from elements of closure or continuation. Lochhead's comments regarding the ending of *Wings* similarly fit *Second Flight* when she states, "The reference to models creates not a past-directed symmetry but a future-directed renewal. The conclusion of the piece then gives the sense that yes, the piece is ending but it wants to continue."²⁸

In summary, composers Hindemith, Gotkovsky, Asia, and Tower each present unique considerations to performers through their distinct compositional language. Studying their background and compositional output demonstrates their significance, and an in-depth study of specific pieces from their oeuvre leads to an educated performance. Ultimately, the goal is to realize composer's intent, guide the listener's reaction, and highlight the performer's virtuosity through careful attention to these observations.

26. Lochhead, "Joan Tower's *Wings* and *Breakfast Rhythms I and II*," 132.

27. Ibid, 134-136.

28. Ibid, 142-143.

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