

**An Examination of the History and Music of Select Classical  
Saxophone Works and Jazz Standards**

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## **Introduction**

The saxophone is a versatile instrument that lives healthily in both the worlds of classical and jazz music. The chosen repertoire for the author's undergraduate senior recital explores these two musical worlds with select movements from contrasting classical pieces and a varying collection of jazz standards. This document, through discussing the selected music, aims to give context to the pieces and their composers while examining and analyzing the works themselves in greater detail.

## **Flute Sonata No. 2 by J.S. Bach**

### **Historical Context**

The first piece for discussion, Johann Sebastian (J.S.) Bach's Flute Sonata No. 2 (BWV 1031), showcases both the expressive and virtuosic nature of music in the Baroque era. Traditionally a three-movement work written for flute and harpsichord, the authenticity of the piece as an original J.S. Bach composition has been questioned by scholars.<sup>1</sup> Some believe Carl Philip Emanuel (C.P.E.) Bach to be the actual composer while others theorize this could be the work of one of J.S. Bach's contemporaries.<sup>2</sup> The uncertainty surrounding authorship also creates doubt as to when the piece was composed, yet scholars estimate Flute Sonata No. 2 was likely composed in the 1730s to 40s.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Robert L. Marshall, "J.S. Bach's Compositions for Solo Flute: A Reconsideration of Their Authenticity and Chronology," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 32, no. 3 (Autumn, 1979): 464-465, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/831251?seq=1>; Jeanne Swack, "'Quantz and the Sonata in Eb Major for Flute and Cembalo, BWV1031,'" *Early Music* 23, no. 1, Flute Issue, (February 1995): 32, 42-43, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3137802>.

<sup>2</sup> Marshall, 464-465; Swack, 31.

<sup>3</sup> Marshall, 464-465; Swack, 42-43.

Questions about the authenticity arise both because BWV 1031's compositional style is atypical of J.S. Bach and because of the similarities BWV 1031 shares with other works of the time.<sup>4</sup> For example, Bach scholar Alfred Dürr describes the "thumping basses, triadic, galant-sounding melodies, and short-breathed phrases" as uncharacteristic of J.S. Bach.<sup>5</sup> In addition, Dürr cites the similarities shared between BWV 1031 and the Sonata in G minor for Flute and Harpsichord (BWV 1020), a work more often credited to C.P.E. Bach, as a reason for doubt.<sup>6</sup> Under this theory, Dürr suggests that BWV 1031 was composed by C.P.E. Bach with assistance from J.S. Bach.<sup>7</sup>

Furthermore, while maintaining similar thoughts about BWV 1031 being "anomalous" of J.S. Bach in composition, scholar Jeanne Swack presents a different theory about the connections shared with other Baroque works.<sup>8</sup> She draws attention to the similarities between BWV 1031 and a Sonata in E-Flat of Baroque composer, Johann Joachim Quantz.<sup>9</sup> Swack points out the shared structure, themes, and styles between the two works.<sup>10</sup> Consequently, she postulates that either Quantz composed both his Sonata in E-Flat and BWV 1031 or that J.S. Bach used Quantz's sonata as a model for his piece, explaining the unusual, atypical style Bach uses.<sup>11</sup> Ultimately, without sufficient evidence to make a definitive conclusion, the authenticity

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<sup>4</sup> Marshall, 471; Swack, 31.

<sup>5</sup> Marshall, 471.

<sup>6</sup> Marshall, 471.

<sup>7</sup> Marshall, 471.

<sup>8</sup> Swack, 31, 47.

<sup>9</sup> Swack, 31.

<sup>10</sup> Swack, 31.

<sup>11</sup> Swack, 31, 47.

of BWV 1031 remains uncertain and leaves scholars questioning.<sup>12</sup> Nevertheless, Bach's Flute Sonata No. 2 remains an excellent piece of music with much to explore in detail.

### Analysis

For the purposes of discussion and analysis, the author will reference the Larry Teal transcription of this Bach work from Teal's *Solos for the Alto Saxophone Player*.<sup>13</sup>

The need to play a transcription of a flute piece on a saxophone recital raises an important point about the history of the saxophone and its repertoire. Invented in 1840 after the Baroque and Classical eras, the saxophone did not gain a significant library of original repertoire until the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>14</sup> Thus, when desiring to perform Baroque music, the performer must look for transcriptions of works originally written for other instruments. This led to Bach's Flute Sonata No. 2 being chosen to represent Baroque music on this recital.

The recital features performances of *Sicilienne* and *Allegro*, the second and third movements respectively. *Sicilienne* is a slow 6/8 movement that begins in C minor. Loosely resembling a ternary form, the A section opens with a quiet, graceful motif in the saxophone. This motif first moves up by step to the neighboring note before returning and leaping further away from the starting note. This primarily eighth-note melody is accompanied in the right hand of the piano by repeated sixteenth-note patterns. The left hand of the piano, with few exceptions, maintains quarter notes on the downbeats throughout the movement. With only

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<sup>12</sup> Swack, 47.

<sup>13</sup> *Solos for the Alto Saxophone Player*, selected and edited by Larry Teal (New York: G. Schirmer, Inc., 2011), 7-14.

<sup>14</sup> Lisa Rothman, "Why Adolphe Sax's Musical Invention Wasn't Taken Seriously," *TIME*, November 5, 2015, <https://time.com/4101405/adolphe-sax-saxophone-history/>; Willie L. Morris III, "The Development of the Saxophone Compositions of Paul Creston," Dissertation, University of Missouri – Kansas City, 1996, 99-100, <https://www.proquest.com/pqdtglobal/docview/304271816/DCE732B7606D4DE9PQ/1?accountid=14882>.

two instruments playing, the composer uses these three distinct rhythmic values simultaneously to thicken the texture and give forward motion to the melodic lines.

The eighth-note melody in the saxophone lasts for seven measures before it plays a sixteenth-note interjection in the eighth measure which is echoed by the piano a measure later. These sixteenth-note runs also serve to take the music into the relative major, Eb major, for a repetition of the beginning but in the new key. Only the first three measures of this repetition are similar, however, and quickly more melodic movement in the saxophone transitions *Sicilienne* into the B section over the next four measures.

The arrival of the B section is marked by another change in key to D major and features greater interaction between the saxophone and piano than has been heard before in the piece. The piano and saxophone exchange a new melody that combines sustained notes with quick, six-note figures that elegantly climb up and down in pitch. The B section only lasts for six measures until the return of the A section in C minor. After three measures of the familiar A section motif, the composer sneaks in two measures of the six-note figure from the B section before closing out *Sicilienne* in C minor.

The third movement, *Allegro*, is a fast 3/8 and captures the technical, virtuosic writing that is so common in Baroque era music. An idea introduced in the B section of *Sicilienne*, *Allegro* is very much a conversation between the saxophone and the piano. However, whereas the second movement was largely based on an eighth-note melody, the third movement places more emphasis on the sixteenth note in the melody. Furthermore, *Allegro* is composed of two larger sections that each get repeated. The first section lasts 60 measures while the second section is 82 measures in length.

The first section begins in Ab major with the piano arpeggiating the first chord, beckoning the saxophone to come play. Instantly, the saxophone answers but appears to be declining the piano's invitation with a descending scalar pattern. After five measures of the two instruments playing in this call-and-response fashion, both the saxophone and the right hand of the piano play unison rhythms with harmony in thirds. The interspersing of unison rhythms between the piano and the saxophone amongst their otherwise conversational or independent lines is a common thread found throughout the movement.

Following the call-and-response style at the start, the instruments next find their own independent, yet complementary lines. The saxophone stays active, executing fast broken chords and scales while the piano plays a smooth counter melody underneath. Then, the roles reverse; the piano is given the lively melody while the saxophone plays quietly below. Clearly, no one voice is more valued than the other as both instruments are of significant melodic and harmonic importance at different moments.

The arrival of the next new melody is marked by a change to a new key. Now in the dominant key of Eb major, the saxophone and piano continue the conversation, largely speaking in unison rhythms. More often here the harmony is at the interval of a sixth rather than the thirds that were heard for brief moments earlier in the movement.

The first section ends in Eb major and repeats back to the beginning. However, when the music continues the second time through, the piece stays in Eb major with a descending melody reminiscent of the beginning of *Allegro*. The composer stays in Eb major for eight measures, expanding on familiar melodic ideas from the first large section by taking them

through different keys. He then introduces a new one measure motif and again uses call-and-response techniques to develop it.

Following the lengthy development of this motif, the music returns to Ab major with the main theme from the beginning back in its home key. Then, the composer brings back the melodic material from the latter portion of the first half of the piece. When heard earlier in the work, this melody was keyed in Eb major; however, this time the melody stays in Ab major and leads into the repeat of the second section of the movement. The completed repetition of the second section brings an end to the fast-paced, conversational *Allegro*.

### **Sonata for E-Flat Alto Saxophone and Piano, Op. 19**

#### **Historical Context**

The second piece on the classical portion of the recital, Paul Creston's Sonata for E-Flat Alto Saxophone and Piano, Op. 19, represents an original composition from the saxophone repertoire.

Born in New York in 1906, Paul Creston was an Italian American composer who wrote over 150 compositions ranging from chamber works and piano pieces to music for choirs, orchestras, and bands.<sup>15</sup> A well-studied pianist, but self-taught as a composer, Creston penned four works for saxophone: Suite for E-Flat Alto Saxophone and Piano (1935), Sonata for E-Flat Alto Saxophone and Piano (1939), Concerto for E-Flat Alto Saxophone and Orchestra (1941), and Rapsodie for E-Flat Alto Saxophone and Organ (1976).<sup>16</sup> With the instrument then

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<sup>15</sup> Morris III, ii; Robert Virgil Sibbing, "An Analytical Study of the Published Sonatas for Saxophone by American Composers," Doctoral thesis, University of Illinois, 1969, 53, <https://www.proquest.com/pqdtglobal/docview/302365627/1B24C1AB88FA4038PQ/4?accountid=14882>.

<sup>16</sup> "Paul Creston," *Britannica*, accessed April 7, 2022, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Paul-Creston>; Morris III, iii; Sibbing, 53-54.

struggling to find serious footing in the concert hall, Creston's works for solo saxophone grew the instrument's repertoire while also acting as inspiration for other composers to write for the instrument.<sup>17</sup>

Compositionally, Creston sets himself apart with his use of rhythm.<sup>18</sup> He often writes in mixed meter while keeping the notated meter the same throughout a piece.<sup>19</sup> Instead of changing the notated meter, Creston alters the phrasing or feeling of the meter of a piece through other devices like his beaming and use of slurs and accents.<sup>20</sup> Not only does he compose this way, but rhythm was so important to Creston that he also wrote two books on the subject: *Principles of Rhythm* (1964) and *Rational Metrical Notation* (1978).<sup>21</sup> These rhythmic ideas are surely heard and felt in his saxophone sonata.

Creston's Sonata, Op. 19 is often considered a standard piece in the classical saxophone repertoire. Written in 1939, the piece is dedicated to saxophonist Cecil Leeson who is widely considered to be the artist that legitimized saxophone in the concert hall.<sup>22</sup> Creston and Leeson first developed a professional relationship when Creston became Leeson's accompanist in 1934, and, in the years following, Creston wrote and dedicated his first three works for saxophone to

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<sup>17</sup> Morris III, ii-iii.

<sup>18</sup> Matt Satola, "Paul Creston," *AllMusic*, accessed April 7, 2022, <https://www.allmusic.com/artist/paul-creston-mn0001350354/biography>; "Paul Creston," *Wise Music Classical*, accessed April 7, 2022, <https://www.wisemusicclassical.com/composer/301/Paul-Creston/>.

<sup>19</sup> Christopher Kyle Sweitzer, "A Metrical Analysis and Rebaring of Paul Creston's Sonata for Alto Saxophone and Piano, Op. 19," Master's thesis, University of Nebraska, December 2010, ii, <https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1030&context=musicstudent>.

<sup>20</sup> Sweitzer, ii.

<sup>21</sup> Sweitzer, 4-5.

<sup>22</sup> "Cecil Leeson, Musician, 86," *The New York Times*, April 20, 1989, <https://www.nytimes.com/1989/04/20/obituaries/cecil-leeson-musician-86.html>; Morris III, 100-101.



Leeson.<sup>23</sup> On February 15, 1940, with Leeson on saxophone and Creston on piano, the two premiered Sonata, Op. 19 at the Carnegie Chamber Music Hall.<sup>24</sup>

## Analysis

Traditionally performed as a three-movement work, the author's recital features a performance of the first two movements. Without publication information in the performed edition of the sonata, the author has included scans of the cover and first page of the piano accompaniment in the appendix for reference. This is the edition used and referenced for the analysis portion of Sonata, Op. 19.

The first movement, *With vigor*, does not hold back from the first beat. In 4/4 with a marked tempo of quarter note equals 126 beats per minute and keyed in E major, the composer clearly does not want the music to lag.<sup>25</sup> Based on one analysis from Robert Sibbing, the first movement follows a "modified sonata-allegro form" where Sibbing identifies an exposition and a development but states there is no recapitulation, instead identifying a lengthy coda.<sup>26</sup>

The exposition opens with an insistent first theme in the saxophone that moves forward with adamant accents from the piano.<sup>27</sup> After the short, vigorous opening, the music almost instantly calms down with a lyrical second theme in the saxophone as if a bird has taken flight and is now effortlessly gliding through the air.<sup>28</sup> Then, in the same way that the music promptly

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<sup>23</sup> Morris III, 100-101.

<sup>24</sup> Morris III, 115-116; Sibbing 53.

<sup>25</sup> Roger Bruce Eckers, "An Analysis of Paul Creston's Sonata for E-flat Alto Saxophone and Piano," Master's thesis, University of Rochester, August 1966, 1, <https://urresearch.rochester.edu/institutionalPublicationPublicView.action?institutionalItemId=1712>.

<sup>26</sup> Sibbing, 56.

<sup>27</sup> Sibbing, 56.

<sup>28</sup> Sibbing, 56.

went from robust to serene, the music becomes intense once again in a flash as Creston extensively develops the first theme in the saxophone.<sup>29</sup> With the saxophone subsequently winding down, the piano has a grand moment to shine with the development of the lyrical second theme punctuated by a repetitive sixteenth-note motif.<sup>30</sup> When the saxophone enters, it too has an extended development of the second theme which features a melody based on triplets.<sup>31</sup>

Following the triplet section, the music transitions back into intensity gradually and soon one hears elements of the first theme.<sup>32</sup> Some would call this return a recapitulation, yet Sibbing calls this a coda, presumably due to the fact the material is less a return to the exposition and more an extended variation and development of specific motifs from the first theme.<sup>33</sup> The coda allows the instruments to build to the finish as the saxophone and piano are firing on all cylinders until the final double bar.

The second movement's title, *With tranquility*, gives performers the perfect instruction for Creston's beautiful and lyrical melodies. Interestingly, the melodies in the second movement nearly all move by step with very few leaps, offering a nice contrast to *With vigor* where large amounts of the melodic content are based on skips and leaps.<sup>34</sup> In 5/4 with a marked tempo of quarter note equals 66 beats per minute, the second movement is keyed in A major and follows a ternary form.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Sibbing, 56.

<sup>30</sup> Sibbing, 56.

<sup>31</sup> Sibbing, 56.

<sup>32</sup> Sibbing, 56.

<sup>33</sup> Eckers, 1-2; Sibbing, 56-57.

<sup>34</sup> Sibbing, 61.

<sup>35</sup> Sibbing, 56-57.

Tranquil wonderfully describes the piano's introduction of the first theme where one hears the left hand patiently providing steady, block chords underneath a flowing, eighth-note-based melody in the right hand.<sup>36</sup> As the saxophone enters with the same legato first theme, the piano moves to all block chords in both hands to add to the previously established serenity.<sup>37</sup> Next, the listener thinks they are hearing a repetition of the first theme in a new key; however, while it begins like the first theme, the melody continues, and this repetition becomes the start of the B section.<sup>38</sup>

At the start of the B section, Creston introduces eighth-note triplets every few beats before writing several consecutive measures based on this idea.<sup>39</sup> The shift to the B section is not only marked by the new triplet rhythm, but the piano also signals this change as it moves from block chords in both hands to sixteenth notes in the left hand while maintaining the block chords in the right hand.<sup>40</sup> These combined elements give the music motion and are especially important as the intensity builds and the tempo increases.<sup>41</sup> Once Creston begins the repetitive, ascending scales on dotted-eighth, sixteenth-note rhythms, the tension truly starts building as the melody climbs. Finally, the saxophone confidently exclaims and the piano answers before the music returns to the same quiet serenity with which the movement began.

This return to serenity signals the start of the second A section with the first theme played in the saxophone, yet this time the piano plays connected sixteenth-note lines

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<sup>36</sup> Sibbing, 56.

<sup>37</sup> Sibbing, 56.

<sup>38</sup> Sibbing, 61.

<sup>39</sup> Sibbing, 61.

<sup>40</sup> Sibbing, 62.

<sup>41</sup> Sibbing, 61-62.

reminiscent of the B section.<sup>42</sup> Not wanting to fully part with ideas from the middle section, Creston also intersperses eighth-note triplets throughout the saxophone melody.<sup>43</sup> Before long, Creston transitions back to block chords in the piano with fewer melodic triplet rhythms as he winds the movement down to a peaceful conclusion. These last notes also conclude the classical saxophone portion of the recital.

As the saxophone is also a prominent instrument in the world of jazz, the second portion of the author's recital features performances of the following eight jazz standards.

### **Straight No Chaser**

First recorded in 1951 by one of the pioneers of bebop, Thelonious Monk, "Straight No Chaser" features a chromatic, angular melody over top of a 12-bar blues form.<sup>44</sup> At first, the chromaticism of the melody might make it difficult to hear this familiar chord progression. However, with an attentive ear, the comfort of the blues starts to sink in.

A common device in Monk's compositions, the melody consists of the repetition of one motif.<sup>45</sup> Yet, to keep the music interesting, Monk offsets the entrance of each repetition to a different beat.<sup>46</sup> In addition, the composer changes the length of the quirky motif with each recurrence.<sup>47</sup> First, the line is five notes, then seven notes, then five notes twice more, then the motif is only four notes before a longer, continuous line lasts until the end of the form.<sup>48</sup> This

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<sup>42</sup> Sibbing, 62.

<sup>43</sup> Sibbing, 62.

<sup>44</sup> "Straight No Chaser," | Stories of Standards," *KUVO*, accessed April 7, 2022, <https://www.kuvo.org/straight-no-chaser-stories-of-standards/>.

<sup>45</sup> *The Real Book – Volume I: C Edition*, Amazon Kindle Ebook, (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Hal Leonard, sixth edition), 393. The author will use and reference this lead sheet regarding analysis throughout the "Straight No Chaser" section.

<sup>46</sup> "Straight No Chaser," | Stories of Standards."

<sup>47</sup> "Straight No Chaser," | Stories of Standards."

<sup>48</sup> "Straight No Chaser," | Stories of Standards."

creative melodic development over the standard blues progression serves to make “Straight No Chaser” one of Monk’s most popular compositions.<sup>49</sup>

### **Maiden Voyage**

In the years following Miles Davis’ seminal modal album *Kind of Blue* (1959), Herbie Hancock composed his own modal piece, “Maiden Voyage,” in 1965.<sup>50</sup> Hancock, playing in Miles Davis’ Second Great Quintet at the time, originally wrote this tune for a cologne commercial and released the piece in 1965 as the title track on an album of the same name.<sup>51</sup> The whole concept album, *Maiden Voyage*, is meant to represent the different rhythms and ideas of the ocean with its five original tracks: “Maiden Voyage,” “The Eye of the Hurricane,” “Little One,” “Survival of the Fittest,” and “Dolphin Dance.”<sup>52</sup>

The tune “Maiden Voyage,” which Hancock has called his favorite composition, features a simple melody of sustained notes overtop a modal chord progression that allows the improviser freedom to explore.<sup>53</sup> In the words of the composer, this piece represents “the splendor of a sea-going vessel on its maiden voyage.”<sup>54</sup> The music itself well illustrates this picture through its melody and chord progression. Following a 32-bar AABA structure, one

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<sup>49</sup> “‘Straight No Chaser,’ | Stories of Standards.”

<sup>50</sup> “Kind of Blue: How Miles Davis Made The Greatest Jazz Album In History,” *Jazzwise*, March 13, 2021, <https://www.jazzwise.com/features/article/kind-of-blue-how-miles-davis-made-the-greatest-jazz-album-in-history>; MasterClass Staff, “How Herbie Hancock Keeps Jazz Standard ‘Maiden Voyage’ Fresh Using Improvisation,” *Masterclass*, last modified August 9, 2021, <https://www.masterclass.com/articles/how-herbie-hancock-keeps-jazz-standard-maiden-voyage-fresh-with-improvisation#want-to-become-a-better-musician>.

<sup>51</sup> “How Herbie Hancock Keeps Jazz Standard ‘Maiden Voyage’ Fresh Using Improvisation.”

<sup>52</sup> “How Herbie Hancock Keeps Jazz Standard ‘Maiden Voyage’ Fresh Using Improvisation;” Matt Micucci, “Song of the Day: Herbie Hancock, ‘Maiden Voyage,’” *JAZZIZ Magazine*, last modified February 2, 2022, <https://www.jazziz.com/song-of-the-day-herbie-hancock-maiden-voyage/>; Herbie Hancock, *Maiden Voyage*, Ron Carter, George Coleman, Freddie Hubbard, and Tony Williams, recorded March 1965, Blue Note Records, digital.

<sup>53</sup> “How Herbie Hancock Keeps Jazz Standard ‘Maiden Voyage’ Fresh Using Improvisation;” *The Real Book – Volume I: C Edition*, 268. The author will use and reference this lead sheet regarding analysis throughout the “Maiden Voyage” section.

<sup>54</sup> “How Herbie Hancock Keeps Jazz Standard ‘Maiden Voyage’ Fresh Using Improvisation.”

could interpret the first two A sections as the wary ship trying twice to take off from the shore. As it finally leaves on its journey at the start of the B section, the music changes key to signal that the ship has left its home. Lastly, the ship returns home in the final A having completed its short, yet momentous maiden voyage.

### **Honeysuckle Rose**

“Honeysuckle Rose,” composed by Thomas Wright “Fats” Waller in 1929, is a tune seated deeply in the swing era.<sup>55</sup> A student of the Harlem stride school of piano playing, Waller was a successful entertainer in addition to having many popular piano and composition credits.<sup>56</sup> As an entertainer, Waller developed a personality that was “larger than life.”<sup>57</sup> He appeared in several films throughout his career, such as *Hooray for Love!*, while also having a strong presence on radio programs, even having programs of his own.<sup>58</sup>

While not one of Waller’s favorite compositions, “Honeysuckle Rose” is certainly one of his most popular.<sup>59</sup> The piece was first composed for a revue at Connie’s Inn in Harlem, and soon after, big bands of the day began playing the tune as it rose in popularity.<sup>60</sup> Like “Maiden Voyage” in structure, this tune also follows a 32-bar AABA form.<sup>61</sup> Largely based on arpeggios, Waller’s repetitive, swinging melody permeates the A section and brings to mind the energy and excitement one would have felt as a star in the swing era. In contrast, the melody of the B

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<sup>55</sup> Biography.com Editors, “Fats Waller Biography,” *Biography*, last modified May 7, 2021, <https://www.biography.com/musician/fats-waller>.

<sup>56</sup> “Fats Waller Biography.”

<sup>57</sup> “Fats Waller Biography.”

<sup>58</sup> “Fats Waller Biography.”

<sup>59</sup> “Fats Waller Biography;” Matt Micucci, “‘Honeysuckle Rose’ (Fats Waller, 1929),” *JAZZIZ Magazine*, last modified January 9, 2017, <https://www.jazziz.com/honeysuckle-rose-fats-waller-1929/>.

<sup>60</sup> “‘Honeysuckle Rose’ (Fats Waller, 1929).”

<sup>61</sup> Thomas “Fats” Waller, “Honeysuckle Rose,” Hal Leonard – Digital, <https://www.sheetmusicplus.com/title/honeysuckle-rose-digital-sheet-music/19425094>. The author will use and reference this lead sheet regarding analysis throughout the “Honeysuckle Rose” section.

section, or bridge, features almost exclusively stepwise motion with more sustained notes. This creates a gradual build in tension that is released at the end of each of the bridge's two phrases.

### **500 Miles High**

Chick Corea and Return to Forever's *Light as a Feather* album is the group's first album released to the public.<sup>62</sup> Recorded in 1972 and released in 1973, the album is a product of the jazz fusion era of the late 1960s and 70s.<sup>63</sup> This genre fused elements of jazz and rock to bring a new sound to the music scene.<sup>64</sup> For example, *Light as a Feather* features Chick Corea on a Fender Rhodes electric piano, Stanley Clarke on electric bass, Joe Farrell on flute and saxophone, Airtó Moreira on drums, percussion, and vocals, and Flora Purim as the lead vocalist.<sup>65</sup> Combined, these musicians recorded a critically-praised album which includes such hits as "Captain Marvel," "Spain," and the jazz standard "500 Miles High."<sup>66</sup>

With music composed by Chick Corea and lyrics by Neville Potter, "500 Miles High" follows a unique form with each chorus lasting 18 measures.<sup>67</sup> Despite the smooth nature of the accompaniment, the melody of "500 Miles High" is fairly pointed in style and leaps from one note to another rather than gradually rising or falling. On the original recording, Flora Purim sings the melody which makes the skips and leaps in the music all the more refreshing to

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<sup>62</sup> Jazz.com, "Light as a Feather," *Chick Corea*, accessed April 11, 2022, <https://chickcorea.com/discography/light-as-a-feather/>; Michael G. Nastos, "Light as a Feather Review," *AllMusic*, accessed April 11, 2022, <https://www.allmusic.com/album/light-as-a-feather-mw0000256202>.

<sup>63</sup> "Light as a Feather Review;" MasterClass Staff, "Jazz Fusion Guide: A Brief History of Jazz Fusion," *MasterClass*, February 24, 2022, <https://www.masterclass.com/articles/jazz-fusion-guide>.

<sup>64</sup> "Jazz Fusion Guide: A Brief History of Jazz Fusion."

<sup>65</sup> "Light as a Feather Review."

<sup>66</sup> "Light as a Feather Review."

<sup>67</sup> "Light as a Feather Review;" *The Real Book – Volume I: C Edition*, 148. The author will use and reference this lead sheet regarding analysis throughout the "500 Miles High" section.

the ear as the tune might at first seem atypical for vocal music.<sup>68</sup> Additionally, each chorus is punctuated by a fast, six-note figure before repeating back to the beginning. Another analysis of this figure might say that it serves as the beginning of the next chorus rather than the end of the current one. Either way, “500 Miles High” is a unique selection with an energizing sound and is a welcome addition to the musical landscape of the recital.

### **Moose the Mooche**

After “500 Miles High” presents music of the 1970s, “Moose the Mooche” takes the listener back in time to the bebop era of the 1940s. Written in 1946 by legendary bebop alto saxophonist Charlie Parker, the title is a reference to the nickname of Parker’s drug dealer in Los Angeles.<sup>69</sup> The tune itself is a contrafact on the popular George Gershwin song “I’ve Got Rhythm.”<sup>70</sup> Scholar Carl Woideck praises “Moose the Mooche” for its melody saying it is, “one of Parker’s finest original melodies of any era.”<sup>71</sup> He cites the fact that Parker composed the A sections as well as the bridge as a reason for the high musical quality.<sup>72</sup> At this point in his career, Parker frequently improvised the B sections of his compositions rather than conceiving of them ahead of time, making “Moose the Mooche” an enjoyable exception.<sup>73</sup>

Parker’s lively tune perfectly exemplifies the high energy and brisk tempi of the bebop era in 32-bar, AABA form.<sup>74</sup> Typical of the bebop style, the melody consists not only of diatonic

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<sup>68</sup> “Light as a Feather Review.”

<sup>69</sup> Carl Woideck, *Charlie Parker: His Life and Music* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: The University of Michigan Press, 1996), 125.

<sup>70</sup> Woideck, 125.

<sup>71</sup> Woideck, 125.

<sup>72</sup> Woideck, 125.

<sup>73</sup> Woideck, 125.

<sup>74</sup> *Charlie Parker Omnibook for E Flat Instruments*, Atlantic Music Corporation, 1978, 4-5. The author will use and reference this lead sheet regarding analysis throughout the “Moose the Mooche” section.



notes, but also of many chromatic passing tones and approach notes. The tune also explores a wide range of the instrument with the highest note being the alto saxophone's D above the staff to the lowest note being the first line E-Flat. Parker's composition navigates this change in range largely through fast arpeggiated chords rather than virtuosic scalar lines. Woideck points out that the device Parker uses as a common thread throughout the whole piece is a motif that often enters on the "and" of beat two.<sup>75</sup> Parker uses this in measures 1 and 3, in the two measures transitioning into the bridge, and many times on the bridge itself. Perhaps difficult to see at first, a closer examination of this motif's integration makes the melody feel complete, cleverly connecting the A and B sections of the work.

### Sunny

Originally a pop song released in 1966, "Sunny" found its way into the jazz world as an upbeat funk tune.<sup>76</sup> Sadly, songwriter Bobby Hebb's inspiration behind the tune is not as joyful as the song itself. In 1963, a day after the assassination of President John F. Kennedy, Hebb's brother was murdered in Nashville.<sup>77</sup> Looking for something to lift himself up, Hebb penned the music and lyrics to what became his biggest hit, "Sunny."<sup>78</sup> The opening lyrics convey the song's central meaning in just one line: "Sunny, yesterday my life was filled with rain, Sunny, you smiled at me and really eased the pain."<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Woideck, 126.

<sup>76</sup> Rick Moore, "Behind the Song: 'Sunny,' Bobby Hebb," *American Songwriter*, accessed April 7, 2022, <https://americansongwriter.com/sunny-bobby-hebb-song-interview/>.

<sup>77</sup> "Behind the Song: 'Sunny,' Bobby Hebb."

<sup>78</sup> "Behind the Song: 'Sunny,' Bobby Hebb."

<sup>79</sup> "Sunny," *Genius Lyrics*, accessed April 7, 2022, <https://genius.com/Bobby-hebb-sunny-lyrics>.

Written in a minor key, Hebb's song surely puts a smile on the listener's face despite the tragic story behind its composition. The song follows a 16-measure AB form.<sup>80</sup> The whole melody is based around the minor pentatonic scale which allows for simple, yet incredibly meaningful musical expression. The A section gives significant space between melodic ideas, whereas the B section features more movement and a greater string of consecutive phrases. Harmonically, Hebb's song is more complex than other pop songs, perhaps making "Sunny" an excellent candidate to become a standard in the jazz repertoire.<sup>81</sup>

### **In a Sentimental Mood**

"In A Sentimental Mood" is significant to the recital repertoire in that the song is the only ballad on the program. Composed by Duke Ellington in 1935, the tune's smooth, melancholy melody explores the saxophone's range and expressive nature.<sup>82</sup> According to the composer, the piece was written at a party following a performance in Durham, North Carolina.<sup>83</sup> Ellington maintains that a few of the party guests were upset and that he wrote "In a Sentimental Mood" on the spot to defuse the situation and calm the guests.<sup>84</sup> However, Ellington biographer James Lincoln Collier suggests that Ellington sourced the melody from saxophonist Otto "Toby" Hardwick who also happened to be the featured performer on the group's 1935 recording of "In a Sentimental Mood."<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Bobby Hebb, "Sunny," Hal Leonard – Digital, <https://www.sheetmusicplus.com/title/sunny-digital-sheet-music/20455119>. The author will use and reference this lead sheet regarding analysis throughout the "Sunny" section.

<sup>81</sup> "Behind the Song: 'Sunny,' Bobby Hebb."

<sup>82</sup> Brent Vaartstra, "In a Sentimental Mood," *Learn Jazz Standards*, June 24, 2012, <https://www.learnjazzstandards.com/jazz-standards/in-a-sentimental-mood/>.

<sup>83</sup> "In a Sentimental Mood."

<sup>84</sup> "In a Sentimental Mood."

<sup>85</sup> Jeremy Wilson, "In a Sentimental Mood (1935)," *JazzStandards.com*, accessed April 11, 2022, <https://www.jazzstandards.com/compositions-0/inasentimentalmood.htm>.

Like so many pieces on the jazz program, “In a Sentimental Mood” is also in 32-bar, AABA form.<sup>86</sup> While the A sections of the tune are usually played in the key of F major, the B section distinctively modulates to Db major.<sup>87</sup> The A section begins with an ascending eighth-note line that lands on a high sustained note. Following this, the melody gradually descends before climbing again to another held pitch and winding down until the next repetition. Conversely, the melody on the bridge features more motion. The bridge starts higher in pitch and gradually moves lower while the A section does the opposite. This varied melodic contour gives the performer an excellent outline on which to embellish and play expressively.

### **Bluesette**

Born in Belgium, Jean-Baptiste “Toots” Thielemans started playing music when he picked up the accordion and began performing in his parents’ café in Brussels as a child.<sup>88</sup> Later learning guitar and harmonica in his teenage years, Thielemans continued developing his musical talents.<sup>89</sup> When he traveled to the United States in 1948, a representative for Benny Goodman heard him play and hired Thielemans to be the band’s guitarist for their 1949 and 1950 European tours.<sup>90</sup> Just two years later, in 1952, Thielemans moved to the United States where he became an established name in jazz.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> *The Real Book – Volume I: C Edition*, 214. The author will use and reference this lead sheet regarding analysis throughout the “In a Sentimental Mood” section.

<sup>87</sup> “In a Sentimental Mood.”

<sup>88</sup> Tom Cole, “Toots Thielemans, Jazz Harmonica Baron, Dies At 94,” *NPR*, last modified August 22, 2016, <https://www.npr.org/2016/08/22/490940271/toots-thielemans-jazz-harmonica-baron-has-died>.

<sup>89</sup> “Toots Thielemans, Jazz Harmonica Baron, Dies At 94.”

<sup>90</sup> “Toots Thielemans, Jazz Harmonica Baron, Dies At 94;” Matt Micucci, “A Short History of ‘Bluesette’ (Toots Thielemans, 1964),” *JAZZIZ Magazine*, last modified August 15, 2017, <https://www.jazziz.com/short-history-bluesette-toots-thielemans-1964/>.

<sup>91</sup> “A Short History of ‘Bluesette’ (Toots Thielemans, 1964);” “Toots Thielemans, Jazz Harmonica Baron, Dies At 94.”

As a composer, Thielemans found a hit in 1964 with the recording of his original composition, “Bluesette.”<sup>92</sup> In three with a fast waltz feeling, what makes the piece so popular is likely the unique technique Thielemans employs on the record.<sup>93</sup> Perhaps best remembered for his jazz harmonica playing, on “Bluesette” Thielemans instead amazingly plays the melodies and improvisations on guitar while also whistling them in unison.<sup>94</sup>

Based on a cyclical chord progression, the buoyant, lilting melody gracefully rises in a scalar fashion before descending with large leaps that resolve by half step. With a 24-bar form, the song effortlessly travels through close to six different keys, making the tune feel almost like one long phrase. Harmonically, the piece starts in B-Flat major before a series of cyclical ii-V chords brings “Bluesette” to E-Flat major, then D-Flat Major, then C-Flat major, and finally back to B-Flat major at the start of the next chorus. Much of the melodic content is sequenced and consists of a half note on beat one with a quarter note on beat three, keeping the tune moving forward while adding to the impression that the melody is one continuous phrase. Despite the possibly overwhelming nature of the quick chord changes, Thielemans artful composition makes for one of the most relaxing and comfortable listens among the selected standards.

### **Conclusion**

Altogether, an examination of the selected recital repertoire presents greater historical context of the performed works and their composers in addition to providing a musical analysis of the pieces themselves. The classical works demonstrate the saxophone’s ability to draw

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<sup>92</sup> “A Short History of ‘Bluesette’ (Toots Thielemans, 1964);” “Toots Thielemans, Jazz Harmonica Baron, Dies At 94.”

<sup>93</sup> “A Short History of ‘Bluesette’ (Toots Thielemans, 1964);” “Toots Thielemans, Jazz Harmonica Baron, Dies At 94;” *The Real Book – Volume 1: C Edition*, 63. The author will use and reference this lead sheet regarding analysis throughout the “Bluesette” section.

<sup>94</sup> “A Short History of ‘Bluesette’ (Toots Thielemans, 1964);” “Toots Thielemans, Jazz Harmonica Baron, Dies At 94.”

musical expression from the written page, both showcasing the lyrical and technical capabilities of the instrument. While raising curious questions about work's composer, the J.S. Bach Flute Sonata No. 2 represents the Baroque era despite the saxophone not being a Baroque instrument. Conversely, Paul Creston's Sonata Op.19 exemplifies an original composition for saxophone that advanced the literature for the instrument with a brisk first movement in a modified sonata-allegro form and an emotional second movement in ternary form.

The collection of selected jazz standards perhaps best illustrates the variety of music available to the saxophone. The jazz pieces allow for the most personal expression from the player, permitting them to speak their voice through their instrument. Additionally, while analysis reveals many similarities across the chosen pieces, each one's melody, chord progression, and place on the timeline of jazz history, makes them unique. In total, the chosen recital works, ranging from transcribed Baroque selections to jazz standards composed in the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, showcase the multi-faceted nature of the saxophone while at their core representing the beauty of music.

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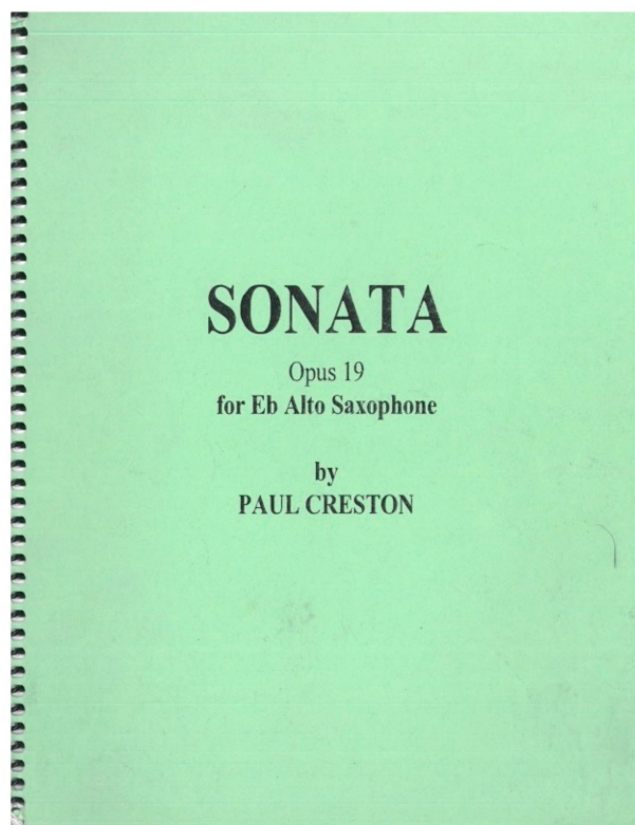
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**Appendix**

2

To Cecil Leeson

**SONATA**  
for Eb Alto Saxophone and Piano

**I** PAUL CRESTON, Op. 19  
(1906—1985)

With vigor [♩ = 126]

E♭ Alto Saxophone

Piano

The image displays the first page of a musical score. It features two staves: an E♭ Alto Saxophone staff and a Piano staff. The music is written in 4/4 time and begins with a tempo marking of "With vigor [♩ = 126]". The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings like "f". The piece is titled "SONATA" and is the first movement, "I". The composer is Paul Creston, Opus 19, composed between 1906 and 1985. The score is dedicated to Cecil Leeson.