

A Performance Guide and Recordings  
for Six New Works for Saxophone and Piano  
by Notable Female Jazz Composers Utilizing Elements of Improvisation  
by  
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A Research Paper Presented in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Musical Arts

Approved October 2022 by the  
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ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY

December 2022

## ABSTRACT

This project aims to produce repertoire that will help bridge the gap between classical music and jazz, particularly focusing on some of the obstacles that female classical saxophonists face when playing jazz. By commissioning six new works for saxophone and piano written by female jazz composers, this project facilitates an entry-level experience with improvised materials that will help break down this barrier for interested saxophonists. The compositions are *From A to Z: Two Women's Journeys* by Ayn Inerto, *Sunlit Dream* by Annie Booth, *Taking Flight* by Katelyn Vincent, *Des-Dunes* by Sam Spear, *Jogo* by Yoko Suzuki, and *Impromptu* by Aida De Moya. For each work, this project provides recordings, performance guides, improvisation guides, biographical contents, and program notes. I hope to encourage young female saxophonists to explore their interests in jazz without fear or reservation through performance of these pieces.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank Christopher Creviston for his inspiring musical teaching and mentorship over the last five years. Thank you Michael Kocour and Catherine Saucier for serving on my doctoral committee and for providing knowledge and guidance throughout my time at Arizona State University (ASU).

This project would not exist without the composers who graciously and eagerly wrote works for this program. Thank you Annie Booth, Aida De Moya, Ayn Inserto, Sam Spear, Yoko Suzuki, and Katelyn Vincent.

I would like to thank Nathan Arch for his artistic collaboration and for the many hours spent together rehearsing, performing, and recording.

Thank you Clarke Rigsby for your masterful recording and editing. Thank you to Robert Spring for being an encouraging and supportive producer.

I am also very thankful to the ASU Herberger Institute for Design and the Arts for awarding me the Creative Constellation Grant to help fund the commissions of these works.

Lastly, I am very grateful for the support of my family, especially my parents, Eileen and Mark Zelenak.

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## CHAPTER 1:

### INTRODUCTION

I have always felt apprehension towards any level of improvisation, especially in jazz. My first introduction to jazz improvisation was the Eb Real Book and looking through the pages gave me anxiety. The open-endedness of the blank measures, long choruses, and fast progressing chord changes made soloing seem impossible. I eventually came across the beginning improvisation books by jazz educator Jamey Aebersold. Even though his “play-a-long” book and cd sets helped break down these elements, the content was too dense and overwhelming for me to feel inspired to learn. Learning the jazz language seemed like an impossible task.

Aside from the theoretical elements, I also felt uncomfortable with jazz improvisation because of my gender. Jazz has always been a male dominated art form and there has been a long history of discrimination towards female jazz musicians. Instrument gender stereotypes, society and social behaviors, and a lack of women role models and mentors contribute to reasons why there are so few women in the jazz world. There is a sexual stereotyping of instruments that is unfortunately true. When young girls are choosing which instruments to play, they “are more likely to gravitate towards ‘feminine’ instruments.”<sup>1</sup> These instruments include the piano, violin, and the flute compared to the saxophone, trumpet, and trombone (jazz instruments). This is a learned behavior that happens in their education. Young women need to see more female representation on all instruments to help them make an informed decision on which instrument to play.

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<sup>1</sup> Ariel Alexander, “Where are the Girls?,” JAZZed, September 2011, 18. <http://login.ezproxy1.lib.asu.edu/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy1.lib.asu.edu/docview/900793970?accountid=4485>.

Women and young women in particular are still “massively underrepresented on the ‘bandstand,’ at major jazz festivals across the world, on the faculties of university jazz departments, and as students in school and post-secondary jazz ensembles.”<sup>2</sup> It is difficult for women to feel a sense of community because of this lack of representation. Not only does being one of the only females in a group deter young women from playing jazz, the negative social and societal views can be constantly daunting to hear. One idea that emerges throughout jazz is the notion that to play a jazz instrument, one must be aggressive and competitive to be effective. Society would not use these two terms to describe women, however this does not mean that they are incapable of performing at a high level. A New York Times music critic, Harold C. Schonberg once said that “playing an instrument is a conflict in which the instrument must be dominated and – generally speaking – men are better dominators than women, if only by virtue of their size and strength.”<sup>3</sup> Absurd statements like these seem to be based on the assumption that the female sex is inferior to men. Not only was the musical content of jazz improvisation difficult to comprehend, but I was also now facing the challenge of learning it in a space I felt I did not truly belong as a woman.

Although discrimination towards women in jazz still exists today, fortunately there are now steps to provide the next generation of female jazz musicians with the support that previous generations were missing. Organizations such as the Women in Jazz Organization, WIJO (est. 2017) and the North American Saxophone Alliance

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<sup>2</sup> Anne Letey Booth, “The Shebop Young Women in Jazz Workshop: An Educational Model for Encouraging the Connection, Expression, and Empowerment of Young Female Musicians Learning a Male Dominated Art Form” (Master’s Thesis, University of Colorado, 2011), 3.

<sup>3</sup> Linda Dahl, *Stormy Weather: The Music and Lives of a Century of Jazzwomen* (New York: Random House, 1984), 38.

Committee for Gender Equity, NASA CGE (est. 2018) have resources devoted to information, support, mentoring programs, events, and community engagements. With efforts to represent and cultivate diversity and inclusion in jazz, the Jazz Education Network (JEN) re-established the Sisters in Jazz Collegiate Combo Competition in 2018 that features young women and non-binary jazz artists in the Sisters in Jazz Quintet. There are also many other organizations with goals of supporting young women in jazz such as the Shebop Young Women in Jazz Organization Workshop (est. 2017), Phoenix Jazz Girls Rising (est. 2019), the Geri Allen Jazz Camp, and the New York Jazz All Girls Jazz Camp.

Even now, I identify primarily as a “classical” saxophonist who enjoys performing in big bands as the baritone saxophonist who rarely improvises. I have tried for many years to immerse myself in the jazz language by taking jazz theory and improvisation courses, transcribing jazz solos, and teaching beginning improvisation to my private students. Few saxophonists play both jazz and classical saxophone with equal fluency, but this is perhaps even more noticeable among female saxophonists. I have found that a lack of confidence and experiencing feelings of apprehension when learning to improvise is a key contributing factor of why some women choose not to participate in jazz.

In an effort to contribute new repertoire for saxophonists that help to bridge the gap between classical and jazz, I have commissioned six new works for saxophone and piano that include entry level improvisational elements. The compositions in this project provide several tools for saxophonists to use to feel less overwhelmed while improvising including smaller solo sections, chord changes, pitch sets, scales, rhythmic variations, and

sample solos. These guidelines give the performer more structure when studying and preparing their improvisations. My hope is that these guidelines will act as a tool to learn the language and help the performer gain confidence in this medium. Each time they perform these pieces, the goal is that they feel more comfortable finding their own improvisational voices.

It was very important to me to commission all female identifying jazz composers for this project.<sup>4</sup> Each composer instantly felt connected to the project and was excited to contribute. This project promotes a sense of community between the composers and performers. We have a shared understanding of how difficult it is to navigate the jazz world as women, especially when it comes to improvisation. I envision that the composers are inviting the performers to cross genres and explore improvisation with a sense of encouragement and empowerment. Although these pieces will be beneficial to any saxophonist who wishes to perform them, my hope is that more female saxophonists will feel comfortable exploring this medium.

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<sup>4</sup> I chose composers based on my network of friends and acquaintances, cold-call emails to composers, the JEN Young Composer's Showcase, and recommendations.

## CHAPTER 2:

### IMPROVISATION OVERVIEW

This collection of works is designed to be performed by saxophonists with any level of improvisation experience, from beginning through advanced. I asked the composers to use a familiar instrumentation (saxophone and piano), to help performers feel more comfortable learning to improvise. For many of the pieces, the performer can choose as much or as little improvisation, depending on their comfort level. Because of the way each piece is structured, the performer has the option to “choose their own adventure.” Each composer has included guidelines and structures to help make the solo section feel more manageable for performers while still providing freedom for creativity and exploration. What is most exciting about this collection is that as performers progress in their improvisation journeys, the pieces will grow with them. When returning to these works, they will have the opportunity to build on previous knowledge and develop new skills with each performance. The following methods are the different ways each composer provided guidelines to the developing improviser.

#### **Small Improvisation Sections**

One of the most intimidating challenges to improvising over a solo section is that the performer has to solo for a long period of time. Many solo sections in standard jazz tunes are twelve, sixteen, or more measures that repeats as many times as needed. For me, the pressure as a soloist to create enough music to fill that time has always made me feel apprehensive about improvising. What if I do not have anything musical to say? Two pieces in the collection include shorter improvisation sections. In the first movement of *Sunlit Dream*, Annie Booth gives the performer an eight-measure solo section. That’s it!

For the whole movement, the performer only has to improvise for eight measures. In the fourth movement, she has the performer improvise only over the last note. In *Des-dues*, Sam Spear includes two smaller solo sections. One is seven measures long and the other is six. She also gives directions on how to improvise. For the first section she says to play a “sparse, floating improvisation with pitch cluster” and for the other she explains to “gradually build intensity.” Using shorter solo sections and including specific compositional descriptors helps to make these improvisation sections more manageable for the performer.

### **Suggested Pitch Sets and Scales**

As a beginning improviser, I would constantly worry about playing a “wrong note.” As a perfectionist, the idea of soloing and accidentally playing a wrong note has been paralyzing. For many of the improvisation sections in this collection, not only do the composers provide the chord changes, but they also include a pitch set or a scale for the performer to use. This helps beginning improvisors to get rid of “wrong note” thinking and frees them up to focus on other aspects of their solo including melody, rhythm, and phrasing. When pitch sets are provided, the composers usually give three or four-note suggestions. These notes define the chords that are being used and help give the improviser a pitch guideline. Scale-wise, the lydian scale is used most frequently throughout the collection because it is simple (major scale with a raised fourth). This harmony is also very common in modal jazz. The solo section in *From A to Z: Two Women’s Journeys* by Ayn Inerto is made up entirely of lydian scales. Booth also favors the lydian scale throughout her piece and Yoko Suzuki uses another mode, the Dorian scale in her piece, *Jogo*. In *Taking Flight*, Kate Vincent suggests a few scales in her

improvisation section including major and minor blues scales and diminished scales that resolve to the tonic.

### **Rhythm Guides**

Another challenge aside from note selection while learning to improvise is rhythm. Sometimes, it is helpful for the soloist to use rhythms from the melody of the tune they are playing. In addition to the piece, *From A to Z: Two Women's Journeys*, Inserto includes an improvisation guide for the solo section. The guide includes a “rhythmic module” that provides rhythms derived from themes in the piece. She also gives examples of how to displace these rhythms to create new ones to use while soloing. Booth also gives rhythmic suggestions in the second movement of *Sunlit Dream*. She gives the soloist a starting point and provides the rhythm for the first four measures of the solo section. From there, the soloist can expand and develop this rhythm to continue their solo. Oftentimes, starting a solo is the most difficult task for new improvisors, so giving them something to start with is very helpful.

### **Sample Solos**

Jazz pedagogue Jerry Coker explains that “one of the fastest means by which [artists] become trained, artistically literate, and inspired is to study the past work of the masters.”<sup>5</sup> Therefore, a common practice for jazz musicians is to transcribe solos that other artists have played. Studying these solos gives great insight to the performer and can be very helpful when navigating difficult chord changes. Four of the six pieces in this collection include sample solos written by the composer. By providing these solos, the composers have given the performers many options on how they approach improvisation.

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<sup>5</sup> Jerry Coker, *Elements of the Jazz Language for the Developing Improvisor* (Alfred Publishing Co., INC, 1991), i.

First, it gives them the option to perform the piece without improvising at all. Sometimes jazz improvisation seems so unapproachable that playing the written solo feels like the only option, and that is okay! There is much to learn from studying and performing a written solo, especially for beginners. Second, the performer can combine the written solo with their own solo, making their improvisation section as short as they need. This can ease the anxiety of having to play a longer solo and the performer can focus on the section they wish to study. Lastly, it can provide ideas for which notes or scales are best to use. Aida De Moya's *Impromptu* includes a longer solo section with more difficult chord changes. Using the sample solo she provided helped me understand which harmonic language to use for my own solo. The solo I played on the recording for this project is very different than the one she composed but having hers as a guide was very beneficial to me when learning it.

### **Piano Tracks**

One of the best ways to practice improvising is to play along with an accompaniment. All six works in the collection include access to piano tracks of the solo sections. This way, performers can play along with the track while testing out their solos, improvising over the pitch sets and scales, and exploring licks that work best. They are able to do this in the privacy of their own practice spaces with more freedom and less pressure from outside sources. Another benefit to the piano tracks is that the performer can get used to the written-out comping of the piano part. Because the piano part is fixed, the soloist can learn the piano's rhythms that play underneath them and how they can fit their solo into it.



## **Final Thoughts**

As someone who typically does not call myself an “improvisor,” this project was very challenging for me. Through performing each piece in the collection, I have learned a great deal about improvisation and myself as an artist. The first thing I learned is that it is okay to ask for help. When I was confused about a concept, I reached out to the composers of this project and also to my jazz colleagues. It is okay to ask for guidance when learning a new language, which is exactly what we are doing. I also learned that it is okay to write out your solos if you do not feel comfortable “spontaneously composing.” I wrote out a lot of my solos because that is what made me feel most comfortable in this process, especially for the recordings. Using the melody is another great source for improvisation. I wanted my solos to be a continuation of the melody in regard to style and phrasing, and I wanted them to match the feel of each piece. This helped give me inspiration on which direction to take my solos. It is important to play your solos with confidence and conviction, even if you may be faking that confidence. Lastly, (though this may be a hard one) try to have fun. Try to find joy in this experience and remember that learning new things can be exciting and rewarding!

## CHAPTER 3:

### *FROM A TO Z: TWO WOMEN'S JOURNEYS*

#### **Composer Biography**

Ayn Inserto is a groundbreaking composer whose music has been performed at Carnegie Hall, Jazz at Lincoln Center, the Berklee Performance Center, JEN Conferences, and prestigious jazz festivals around the world. She is a mentor for the Women in Jazz Organization and a member of the Board of Directors for the Jazz Education Network. Her big band, the Ayn Inserto Jazz Orchestra, has recorded three albums with special guests Bob Brookmeyer, John Fedchock, George Garzone and Sean Jones. She currently resides in Boston where she is a Professor of jazz composition at Berklee College of Music.

I came across Inserto's music through my professor at ASU, Michael Kocour. He suggested her as a composer for my project. I emailed her and we met over zoom to discuss my project. She was so encouraging and supportive and was thrilled to be a part of it. She suggested her former students as composers for the project as well.

## Program Note

When Kristen Zelenak first approached me with her project, I was beyond honored and thrilled. Taking the initiative to empower women composers is much needed in the music world. It was also inspirational for me to be composing something different than what I am normally known for. The other inspirational thing was that she wanted to also demystify improvisation for classical saxophonists and have it be an approachable element within the compositions.

The title itself is full circle. One of my first compositions was inspired by pianist Rachel Z, which I aptly named "To Z from A". As Kristen and I have had our journeys as women within a patriarchal field, we've had to navigate through stereotypes. Therefore the title, "From A to Z: Two Women's Journeys" seemed appropriate.

The composition itself is in two parts. It starts off as a haunting waltz, with a piano ostinato that has a back and forth "rocking" setting like a cradle. It is meant to have a bit of eerie beauty, not quite settled. There are times of dissonances that should be embraced which are normally led to by melodic writing; the vertical/harmonic aspect is not a focus. Rather, there are times when the piano and saxophone are on their independent journeys, and other times they complement each other.

The second part is bouncy and energetic. There are times where there is a dual tonality aspect between the two performers. Once again, the performers should embrace their own parts and allow the way the "clashes" happen. The overall sound is Lydian-esque, thus leading the improvisation section. I wanted to have an improvisation section that was accessible to the less or non-experienced musician. Choosing Lydian with shifting tonal centers was a way of doing so. While this section is a fast tempo, the harmonic rhythm i.e. how quickly the chord/mode changes is not and will allow the performer to create improvisations that can be simpler. The main objective of improvisation is that it is just spontaneous composition in my opinion. Creating melodies that relate to the themes of the composition and allow an organic manner of developing within an improvisation is key. The improviser should not feel the pressure of creating virtuoso-type lines, but really focus on being lyrical.

Finally, the main idea of the composition is that the performers are independent, yet partners at the same time. The times of independence that happen simultaneously is reflective of how two different people, while doing their own thing, can also produce a whole other sound when put together. And the other times when they are complementary to each other, it is meant to reflect how they can work together. To me, this is very reflective of the women's musician journey: we are strong, we are independent, we have our own voice, but we also work well together and support one another.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Ayn Inseto, *From A to Z Two Women's Journeys* (AynaKleina Nite Music, ASCAP, 2021).

## Performance Guide

*From A to Z: Two Women's Journeys* by Ayn Inserto, is an eight-minute, two movement work for alto saxophone and piano. The first section is a slow, lyrical movement that is labeled “Haunting.” The second section includes a faster contrasting movement labeled “With Energy!” The improvisation element is in the second section and Inserto uses the Lydian scale as the basis of the harmonic material. This performance guide addresses phrasing, style and articulation, intonation, and ensemble alignment.

The first section, “Haunting,” is a “waltz, with a piano ostinato that has a back and forth "rocking" setting like a cradle.”<sup>7</sup> The saxophone melody is comprised of a Cmin7#11 scale while the piano is playing in Db Major sonorities. The saxophone and piano parts are in different key centers and Inserto states “the vertical/harmonic aspect is not a focus.”<sup>8</sup> The performers should be aware that they are playing together in clashing keys, however, sometimes the harmonies line up to create less dissonant sounding chords. The contrasting harmonies that Inserto uses help to create this “haunting” effect and it is important as a performer to keep this in mind.

The style of the first section is lyrical and legato. Articulations should be smooth and connected, especially during slurred passages. This is especially important while slurring larger intervals. For example, m. 10 has a leap from a Bb to an F. It is important for these notes to be connected as to not disrupt the phrase. Another example is in m. 29. This leap down from a middle D to a G can be tricky when slurred. It is important to keep the embouchure loose and voicing engaged to let the G speak clearly.

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<sup>7</sup> Inserto, *From A to Z Two Women's Journeys*.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

**Example 1:** *From A to Z: Two Women’s Journeys*, saxophone part, phrasing distinction, m. 28-29. Used with permission from the copyright holder.<sup>9</sup>



The first section of this piece includes long phrases that span 21 or 22 measures. The first overarching phrase that the saxophone plays is from m. 7 to 28. While this phrase includes smaller sentences, it is important for the performer to connect them to achieve the longer line. This can be done by energizing the rests and connecting the fragments by continuing the air direction as if the rests did not exist. The form of the first section includes six parts that are through composed. They include an introduction, four large phrases, and a coda. It is important to understand the form when performing this piece, especially in regard to phrasing.

**Table 1:** Phrase Map of *From A to Z: Two Women’s Journeys* “Haunting”

Phrase Map: First Section	
Intro	m. 1-6
Phrase 1	m. 7-28
Phrase 2	m. 28-49
Phrase 3	m. 49-71
Phrase 4	m. 71-90
Coda	m. 90-99

There are certain intonation issues in this section that are important to address. Many notes on the saxophone tend to be sharp and it is important that the performer is aware of the notes they need to lower. In m. 44, the saxophonist ends their phrase on a high E (concert G). It is especially important to lower this pitch because in m. 45, it is being played over a C major sonority in the piano. An easy way to achieve this is to drop

<sup>9</sup> All examples for *From A to Z Two Women’s Journeys* are in treble clef.

the C1 key. Another spot to address is m. 62 when the saxophonist holds out their high C# (concert E) under an A major chord. It is important to play the C# in tune because it is a chord tone. To help keep the pitch down, add keys 4, 5, and 6 when holding out the note. The last pitch issue in this section is in m. 66 when the saxophone holds out their middle E (concert C#) for four measures. The harmony between the piano and saxophone does not line up, however it is important to keep the pitch steady in relation to other notes in the phrase. A great way to help with this note is to add the low B key.

The second section contrasts greatly from the first. This section titled “With Energy!” has bouncy and energetic rhythms with a quirky melody. Like the first section, there is a dual tonality between the saxophone and piano parts. The harmony of the melody and the solo section is “Lydian-esque.” The form of the movement is an ABA form with a solo section after the first A.

**Table 2:** Phrase Map of *From A to Z: Two Women’s Journeys* “With Energy!”

Phrase Map: Second Section		
A	Intro	m. 99-107
	Phrase 1	m. 107-116
	Phrase 2	m. 116-124
	Phrase 3	m. 124-133
Solo	Intro	m. 133-137
	Solo Section	m. 137-161
B	Transition	m. 161-169
	Phrase 1	m. 169-185
	Transition back to A	m. 185-194
A	Phrase 1	m. 194-203
	Phrase 2	m. 203-211
	Phrase 3	m. 211- 219
	6 measure coda	m. 219-224

The performer must pay close attention to the notated articulation to convey the style of this section. Staccato notes should be played very short with a stopped breath release to create the “bounciness” of the music. Notes marked with a tenuto should be

played full length and touch the next note or rest. Using both air and tongue emphasis on accents will help bring them out from the notes around them. Slurred notes should be smooth and connected by using fast air. Example 2 shows the many articulation markings the composer uses to communicate the correct style to the performer.

**Example 2:** *From A to Z: Two Women's Journeys*, saxophone part, style, m. 107-116.

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Inserto also uses rhythmic syncopation to create the bouncy and energetic style of this section. When this happens, it is important for the performer to highlight the syncopation through articulation. For example, in m. 121-123, the phrase ends with a syncopated passage. The performer should use more air to bring out the notes marked with a tenuto. During these measures, the piano part contrasts with the saxophone part by playing mostly on the beat and bringing out the syncopation will also highlight this contrast.

**Example 3:** *From A to Z: Two Women's Journeys*, saxophone part, rhythmic distinction, m. 121-123. Used with permission from the copyright holder.



It is also important for the performer to distinguish the style change that happens in m. 161 of the B section. The saxophone melody is mostly slurred and the notes need to

be played as smooth and connected as possible to highlight this contrasting section. The transition back to the A section is from m. 185-193. The bouncy and energetic style is reintroduced, but in a more aggressive way. Inserto plays with rhythm in the saxophone part and gives the piano accented chords to play underneath. The dynamic level also rises to a forte in the piano and a fortissimo in the saxophone part, making this the dynamic peak of the section. To match the piano's intensity, the saxophonist should give an accented emphasis on the beginnings of each slurred note grouping.

**Example 4:** *From A to Z: Two Women's Journeys*, score, articulation distinction, m. 185-186. Used with permission from the copyright holder.

The image displays a musical score for two instruments: saxophone and piano. The saxophone part is on a single staff at the top, featuring a melodic line with slurs and accents. The piano part consists of two staves below, showing chordal accompaniment with slurs and accents. The dynamic markings are *ff* for the saxophone and *f* for the piano. The key signature has two sharps (F# and C#), and the time signature is 4/4. The score covers measures 185 and 186.



## Improvisation Guide

There is one solo section in *From A to Z: Two Women's Journeys* that occurs in the second movement. In this twenty-eight-measure section, Inserto exclusively suggests the use of the Lydian scale, which equates to a major scale with a raised fourth. There are four different scales used in this section including D, C, Bb, and Eb Lydian. In addition to the work, Inserto provides an improvisation guide that explains modes, pitch modules, and rhythms. She spells out each scale and labels the note according to the chord tones and extensions.

**Table 3:** *From A to Z: Two Women's Journeys*, Improvisation Guide, modal spelling

**Complete Modes for Improvisation Section**

D Lydian: 1 9 3 #11 5 13 7 1

C Lydian: 1 9 3 #11 5 13 7 1

Bb Lydian: 1 9 3 #11 5 13 7 1

Eb Lydian: 1 9 3 #11 5 13 7 1

Inserto explains:

“For each Lydian Mode, the labels are 1, 3, 5, 7 as the chord tones and 9, #11, 13 for the extensions. If the pitch choice is a chord tone, then there will be a more diatonic and vertical sound. If the pitch choice is an extension, then there will be a more “float-like” sound. Resolving an extension into a chord tone by step in either direction will give a sense of tension and resolution. A resolution by a half step is even stronger. Since this is a modern piece, the 7<sup>th</sup> is regarded as a chord tone, although treating it like a traditional leading tone to the tonic will also offer a strong resolution.”<sup>10</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Inserto, Improvisation guide, 1.

This explanation gives the improviser directions regarding which notes to use and how to use them to transition from one scale to the next. Inserto also provides a pitch module idea sheet. She takes the notes derived from the first theme of the second movement and shows how to rearrange the notes in many different ways. These permutations can then be used as material for new passages that the soloist can play. These notes can be transposed for other Lydian modes as well. Using this idea with different themes in the work can also provide the soloist with many options. Learning these patterns can also help the soloist pull material when improvising.

**Table 4:** *From A to Z: Two Women's Journeys*, Improvisation Guide, pitch module ideas

**Pitch module ideas**

Derived from the theme



Permutations etc.



Aside from providing pitch material in the improvisation guide, Inserto also gives the performer rhythmic ideas. She includes two ideas derived from the theme and shows how to displace them to create a new rhythm. By including these ideas, she is teaching the improviser how to use rhythmic material from the piece to create different rhythmic variations. She suggests, “it is best to keep things simple. Do not worry about the need for fancy technique. Some of the best improvisations have been lyrical melodies.”<sup>11</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Inserto, *Improvisation Guide*, 2.

**Table 5:** *From A to Z: Two Women's Journeys*, Improvisation Guide, rhythmic module

ideas

**Rhythmic module ideas**  
Two ideas derived from theme

a) b)

Displacement of "a" by quarter note

Displacement of "a" by 8th note

Fragments of "a" Expansion of "a"

While forming my own solo, Inserto's improvisation guide was incredibly helpful for my understanding of this section (and overall improvisation in general.) I used many elements of this work while improvising. For my first phrase, I used the first measure of the theme and built a sequence by raising the notes by one step. This helped lead me to an idea of how to end the phrase while resolving to a chord tone.

**Example 5:** *From A to Z: Two Women's Journeys*, Zelenak Solo, sequence

D lydian

D lydian

Another way I used the tune was to take a rhythmic fragment and develop it into my own phrase. Inserto likes to use two sixteenth notes followed by an eighth note in this piece, specifically using a descending three note motive. This gives emphasis on the first



## CHAPTER 4

### *SUNLIT DREAM*

#### **Composer Biography**

Annie Booth is an award-winning composer, arranger, and jazz pianist. She has received national recognition for her work as a composer/arranger with awards and grants. Annie's writing spans from small group jazz to big band and chamber works. Additionally, Booth leads and writes for the Annie Booth Big Band, an 18-piece jazz orchestra. Annie Booth is a respected jazz educator and has appeared as a guest artist-educator at jazz festivals, universities, and more. She is the founder of the SheBop Young Women in Jazz Workshop and has recently served on the faculties of the University of Colorado and the University of Northern Colorado, teaching jazz composition and jazz piano. Booth holds Bachelor's and Master's degrees from the the University of Colorado. Her full bio can be found at <http://www.annieboothmusic.com/about>.

I was introduced to Booth's music through a mutual friend, composer Katelyn Vincent. After listening to her music, I was drawn to her beautiful melodies and rhythmic playfulness. I reached out to Booth via email and we met through a phone call discussing the premise of the project. She was immediately drawn to the idea of entry level improvisation. She was the first composer to sign on, and this work is perfect for the project.

## Program Note

Inspired by the poet Rupi Kaur's 2017 poetry collection, *the sun and her flowers*, Annie Booth's *Sunlit Dream* explores four themes Kaur describes as the "recipe of life:" falling, rooting, rising, and blooming

*think of those flowers you plant in the garden each year  
they will teach you  
that people too*

*must wilt fall  
root  
rise*

*in order to bloom*

- rupi kaur

While this piece is through-composed for soprano saxophone and piano, it incorporates elemental aspects of improvisation for the saxophonist, which manifest in different manners and scopes in each movement. It is an exploration of modal harmony and an introduction to modal jazz improvisation. Included below is some insight into the nature of each movement and its improvisational section, along with helpful resources for the saxophonist to consult in preparation of the piece.

### I. Falling

The atmosphere of *Falling* is at once contemplative and quirky. It features an 8-measure improvisational section (mm. 19-27) in which the saxophonist will explore 3 modalities via chord-scales — [concert] **E Dorian**, [concert] **A Aeolian**, and [concert] **Ab Lydian**. This improvisational section is supported by piano accompaniment.

### II. Rooting

Grounded by open fifths and octaves and driven by a distinct bluesy affect, *Rooting* has a definitive energy. The improvisational section in this movement features a variation on a *tumbao* in the piano accompaniment. Once again, the saxophonist is invited to explore modal harmony - primarily in 4-measure swaths and primarily in **Lydian** tonalities. The difference in this movement, however, is that the saxophonist is given a rhythmic template that they may choose to work with as well; the first four measure of the improv section outlines this suggested rhythmic idea.

### III. Rising

A quick waltz (almost perceptible in 1) gives *Rising* its bubbling energy and forward motion. The main theme, heard in the saxophone beginning at measure 9, makes its

evolution up a whole step by the time it recapitulates at measure 83. The final coda section at measure 111 serves the purpose of the final ‘palette cleanser’ from the relentless energy of the bulk of the piece. This section is almost meant to exist as the credits do at the end of a film; the piece is wrapped up yet a new vignette is introduced that re-contextualizes the previous material.

The improvisational section for the saxophonist - 16 measures beginning at m. 46 - simply fluctuates between two chords - **concert A-9** and **concert B-9b6**. These chords are related in many ways and as such, a six-note scheme of “common tones” is offered for the saxophonist as pitch material to explore throughout their solo. Of course, the saxophonist should feel license to explore the *differences* between these two chords as well - notably the half step bend between the concert C (the 3rd) found in the A-9 and the concert C# (the 9th) found in the B-9.

#### **IV. Blooming**

The stylistic indication on the music of *Blooming* is “majestic” and this piece aims to capture the emotion of the literal and metaphorical act of blooming. Generally, blooming is a positive, joyful phenomenon but it’s true that all positive change means letting go of things from the past, and this melody’s occasional melancholic tendencies aims to capture this emotion. *Blooming* features improvisation only on the very last chord of the piece, when the saxophonist is given the indication to improvise over a concert **G Lydian** chord. The saxophonist should feel compelled to play as much or as little over this as they would like. They should hit the written note (concert A) first, and move from there. It may be thought of as an “improvised cadenza”<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Annie Booth, *Sunlit Dream* (AnnieBelle Music, ASCAP, 2021).

## **Performance Guide**

*Sunlit Dream* by Annie Booth is a nine-minute work, written for soprano saxophone and piano, that includes four contrasting movements. It is based on Rupi Kaur's 2017 poem, *the sun and her flowers*. Each movement derives from the idea that in order for a flower to bloom it must wilt (fall), root itself to the ground, and rise from the earth. Booth uses modal harmony throughout this piece and favors extended harmonies in the piano accompaniment. She incorporates rhythmic playfulness that is achieved through frequent time signature changes and the use of hemiolas. This performance guide highlights style and articulation, rhythm, ensemble considerations, and phrasing.

### **Movement I. "Falling"**

The first movement of *Sunlit Dream* is slow and contemplative. Most of the melodic motives are descending in nature and give the listener a sense of longing. Booth achieves this partially through her use of articulation. In general, when a line descends, the notes are either slurred or unmarked. These lines should be played as connected as possible. When the line ascends, the notes are usually marked with a staccato and indicates that they should be played with lift and bounce, depicting upward energy and motion. An example of this rising and falling motive achieved through articulation is in m. 10-14.



**Example 7:** *Sunlit Dream I.*, saxophone part, articulation, m. 10-14. Used with permission from the copyright holder.



Throughout the work, Booth plays with rhythm and meter. To help with ensemble alignment, there are many times when it is important for the saxophonist to know when the piano is playing in triple or duple meter. For example, in m. 39, the saxophonist has a quarter-note tied to a triplet eighth note passage. It is helpful for the saxophonist to know that the piano plays triplet eighth notes under their tie. Furthermore, the piano part goes back to duple on beat four with the three sixteenth note pickups. If the performer is aware of the pianist's rhythm, they can come in together on the downbeat of m. 40 with no issues. This information also applies to the rest of the phrase, especially in m. 40 when the piano and saxophone plays the beat 2 and 3 eighth notes together.

**Example 8:** *Sunlit Dream I.*, score, rhythm clarification, m. 39-41. Used with permission from the copyright holder.

Musical score for Soprano Saxophone (Sop. Sax.) and Piano (Pno.) parts, measures 39-41. The score is written on three staves. The top staff is for the Soprano Saxophone, the middle staff is for the Piano right hand, and the bottom staff is for the Piano left hand. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 3/4. The score includes triplet markings and a *mf* dynamic marking.

## Movement II. “Rooting”

The second movement of *Sunlit Dream* has a quick tempo and is very energized. Booth uses a variation of the tumbao rhythm in the piano accompaniment. The style of this movement is very spirited and performing the articulation correctly will help with this feel. Staccato articulations should be crisp and pointed. Booth introduces marcato accents throughout this movement, and they should be played short and separated. Also, notes without articulation markings can be played with some separation to keep the phrase moving forward.

There are many instances of rhythmic hemiolas throughout this movement, especially duple over triple meter. For ensemble precision, it is important to highlight where these instances occur. For example, in m. 25 and 84 the saxophone plays a figure that is four over three and the piano is in two over three. It is helpful for the saxophonist to listen to the piano part and line up their group of four into the piano’s group of two. This is difficult because the underlying beat is still in three. Knowing what the piano part is doing will help both musicians play together. It is also very easy to rush this figure and the performer should be aware of this tendency.

**Example 9:** *Sunlit Dream II.*, score, rhythmic definition, m. 25. Used with permission from the copyright holder.

The image shows a musical score for Example 9, measure 25. It consists of two staves: Soprano Saxophone (Sop. Sax.) and Piano (Pno.). The key signature has two flats (Bb and Eb), and the time signature is 4/4. The Soprano Saxophone part features a rhythmic figure of four eighth notes beamed together, with a '2' above the first two notes and another '2' below the last two notes, indicating a 2-over-2 feel. The Piano part features a rhythmic figure of two eighth notes beamed together, with a '2' above them, indicating a 2-over-2 feel. Both parts are marked with a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic.

Another important situation to mention in regard to playing in four over three is in m. 32-33. Because the rhythm starts with an eighth rest, it can be very difficult for the performer play this rhythm correctly. The tendency would be to treat the duple eighth rest like a typical eighth rest, resulting in the first note being late and therefore the rest of the rhythm would get compressed. A helpful way to avoid this is to learn the rhythm without the eighth rest. By playing a note in the rest, the performer can learn the rhythm correctly. When performing, I found success by playing the phrase this way, and just not letting the first note of the passage speak. This rhythm is also difficult because the sixteenth notes in m. 32 and 33 are different lengths. The sixteenth notes in m. 33 are faster because they occur in the space of half a beat as opposed to the ones in m. 32 that are more stretched out.

**Example 10:** *Sunlit Dream II. Rooting*, saxophone part, rhythm distinction m. 32-33.

Used with permission from the copyright holder.<sup>13</sup>



### **Movement III. “Rising”**

The third movement of *Sunlit Dream* is a quick waltz with forward motion. It also features four over three hemiola rhythms similar to the second movement, only now at a faster tempo. The feel is almost perceptible in one, however, to keep the tempo from slowing down and preserving the forward motion, it is best felt in three. Because of the quicker tempo (quarter note equals 176), it is important to not let phrasing feel rushed and

<sup>13</sup> All examples for *Sunlit Dream* are in treble clef. 27

panicked. It is easy for the performer to compress sixteenth notes, especially when they are used as a pickup. To help avoid this issue, practicing with metronome is essential.

While the phrasing in this movement has forward motion, there is one instance where the music can be pulled back for dramatic emphasis. Booth writes a five-measure tag at the end of the solo section that includes a written out rhythmic slowdown in the piano part. This “dream-like” suspension can be further emphasized by adding a fermata to the downbeat of m. 66. This gives the saxophonist the freedom to enter with the pickups to m. 67 as they see fit to start the next section. This moment serves as a great place to pause and recollect before continuing on in the piece.

**Example 11:** *Sunlit Dream III*, score, phrasing distinction, m. 61-67. Used with permission from the copyright holder.

The image shows a musical score for Soprano Saxophone (Sop. Sax.) and Piano (Pno.). The score is for measures 61 through 67. The key signature is C#-9(b6). The saxophone part starts with a pickup to measure 67. The piano part includes a written out rhythmic slowdown and a fermata on the downbeat of measure 66. The score is marked with 'play this' and 'mf'.

Booth includes new techniques in this movement to add tension and excitement including trills and glissandos. When playing the trills, it is necessary to follow the forte piano crescendo dynamic marking while keeping the trill as fast as possible. For the glissandos in m. 34-35 and m. 108-109, it is important to hold out the primary note for at least two beats and then glissando on beat three. There are two ways to slide up the octave: chromatic and smoothly voiced portamento. Personally, I favor the voiced glissando but it can be more difficult. For example, in m. 34-35 there is a slide between

middle C# and high C#. To voice this interval properly it is helpful to press all six fingers halfway down almost playing a middle D with the octave key. From there you can use your voicing and the opening of your fingers to achieve a smooth glissando. Also, once you hit the high C# you can put your right hand down to keep the pitch from being sharp. Although this makes for a lot of finger movement, it makes the transition between notes smoother and more in tune.

#### **Movement IV. “Blooming”**

The fourth movement of *Sunlit Dream* is majestic and joyful. The flower has passed through its journey and is now blooming. Although it is important to follow the articulation markings, overall, this movement is more legato than the others. Booth includes the addition of grace notes to the melody to enhance certain notes and keep the phrase pushing forward. This movement is not very technically challenging; however, the performer will have more success achieving the feel of this movement by understanding the phrase structure.

This movement is comprised of four sections: an introduction, two large phrases, and a coda. The first phrase starts at a soft dynamic and establishes the rhythmic and melodic themes. The piano accompaniment is in a high range and it helps make the feel of this section light and delicate. At the start of the second phrase in m. 19, the piano part drops an octave and the saxophone part is more reminiscent of an improvised solo than a melody. The lower timber of the piano and the use of faster notes and rhythms in the saxophone part help to build intensity. This section builds from m.19 and reaches the emotional peak in m. 26. Booth also gives the direction “with emotion” to further highlight this measure. From there, the piece continues to calm down until the improvised

cadenza of the last note. The performer has the freedom to play for as long as they feel necessary, but I favor a shorter cadenza.

**Table 6:** Phrase Map, *Sunlit Dream* IV. “Blooming”

Phrase Map: <i>Sunlit Dream</i> IV. Blooming	
Intro	m. 1-6
Phrase 1	m. 7-18
Phrase 2	m. 19-29
Coda	m. 30-40

## Improvisation Guide

### Movement I. “Falling”

Annie Booth also includes an improvisation guide with her piece, *Sunlit Dream*. Each of the four movements includes some form of improvisation. The first movement includes an eight-measure improvisation that occurs after the exposition. This small section includes three chord changes and is based on the F# Dorian scale, B Aeolian scale, and Bb Lydian scale. Booth also includes a pitch set for performers who need more structure. The four notes she suggests are the 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, and 7<sup>th</sup> notes of each scale. These notes are defining features of the chords being used. The 3<sup>rd</sup> tells the performer if it is major or minor. The 4<sup>th</sup> is a significant note in the Lydian scale because it is the only one of the Greek modes that incorporates a #4, making it have a distinct sound. The 5<sup>th</sup> is a chord tone and is a good anchor note. The 7<sup>th</sup> tells the performer if the chord has a dominant or major 7<sup>th</sup>. These suggested notes are useful to the improviser as they navigate this section. Booth also spells out the modes of this section in her improvisation guide. The saxophonist should reference the transposed scales.

**Table 7:** *Sunlit Dream*, improvisation guide, mvt. I<sup>14</sup>

The image displays three musical staves, each representing a different tonality. Each staff is divided into two parts: a 'concert' scale and a '[transposed]' scale. The first staff, labeled 'TONALITY #1', shows the concert E Dorian Scale and the transposed F# Dorian Scale. The second staff, labeled 'TONALITY #2', shows the concert A Aeolian Scale and the transposed B Aeolian Scale. The third staff, labeled 'TONALITY #3', shows the concert Ab Lydian Scale and the transposed Bb Lydian Scale. Each scale is written in a single line of music with a treble clef, showing the sequence of notes for that mode.

<sup>14</sup> Booth, Improvisation guide, 1.

## Movement II. “Rooting

The second movement includes a more challenging improvisation section that is twenty measures long. However, Booth gives the performer ample information to use as a guide. To start the solo, she gives a four-measure rhythmic suggestion. Sometimes starting solos can be the most difficult part of improvisation and this gives the performer a beginning rhythmic framework, therefore allowing them to develop the rhythm (and solo) as they see fit.

**Example 12:** *Sunlit Dream II.*, saxophone part, rhythmic suggestion, m. 50-54. Used with permission from the copyright holder.

50 E<sup>7</sup> E Lydian scale  
Note suggestions: G#, A#, D#

rhythmic suggestion

In this section, Booth includes five different chord changes and suggests scales and pitch sets similar to the first movement. However, different than the first movement, she also adds the chord change symbols to each set of changes. The four Lydian scales match the major seventh chords, and the minor pentatonic scale matches the minor ninth chord. This helps teach the performer which scales work best among certain chord changes. Each modal harmony lasts four measures. This allows a performer an ample amount of time to explore these sonorities without having to worry about quick changes. Booth also introduces a time signature change from 4/4 to 3/4 in m. 64-65. To help the performer navigate this change, she includes a written-out gesture for the soloist to play. Incorporating this time signature change also helps to indicate the end of the improvisation section because it occurs right before the last phrase of the solo section.

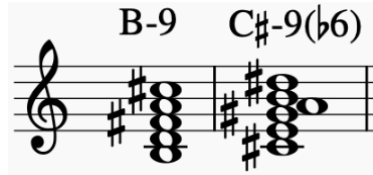


Booth gives the direction of “winding down improvisation” to help transition from the improvisation section to the final theme of the movement.

### **Movement III. “Rising”**

The third movement includes a sixteen-measure solo section that fluctuates between two chords: B minor 9 and C# minor 9. These chords are related in many ways and Booth includes a six-note scheme of “common tones” as pitch material for the performer to use for their solo. She introduces these notes by suggesting them as the first measure. Another way to approach this solo section is to follow the chord changes and use the arpeggios of the extended chords for note material. The performer can explore the differences between the chords including the half step between the D (3<sup>rd</sup> of the D minor 9) and the D# (9<sup>th</sup> of the C# minor 9).

**Table 8:** *Sunlit Dream III*, Chord Spelling



### **Movement IV. “Blooming”**

The fourth movement includes a very short improvisation over the last note of the piece. The pianist plays a concert G major 9 (#11) chord and Booth suggests that the soloist use the concert G Lydian scale (A Lydian for the saxophonist). This mode fits the chord perfectly because the #4 of the scale is the same as the #11 of the chord. The performer should treat this as an improvised cadenza, playing as many or as few notes as they feel best completes the piece. Personally, I favor a shorter cadenza, but the choice is up to the performer. Booth gives the direction to hold out the concert G for a while before

improvising. It is helpful for the performer to be aware that the piano plays during this measure and their fermata occurs on beat four. It is also helpful to end the solo on a chord tone for sonic closure.

**Example 13:** *Sunlit Dream IV*, Zelenak solo, improvised cadenza.

improvise a few notes  
over A Lydian scale  
(improvised cadenza)



The musical notation shows a single staff in 4/4 time. It begins with a fermata over the note A4. The melody then consists of a series of eighth notes: B4, C#5, D5, E5, F#5, G5, A5, B5, C#6, D6, E6, F#6, G6, A6, B6, C#7, D7, E7, F#7, G7, A7, B7, C#8, D8, E8, F#8, G8, A8, B8, C#9, D9, E9, F#9, G9, A9, B9, C#10, D10, E10, F#10, G10, A10, B10, C#11, D11, E11, F#11, G11, A11, B11, C#12, D12, E12, F#12, G12, A12, B12, C#13, D13, E13, F#13, G13, A13, B13, C#14, D14, E14, F#14, G14, A14, B14, C#15, D15, E15, F#15, G15, A15, B15, C#16, D16, E16, F#16, G16, A16, B16, C#17, D17, E17, F#17, G17, A17, B17, C#18, D18, E18, F#18, G18, A18, B18, C#19, D19, E19, F#19, G19, A19, B19, C#20, D20, E20, F#20, G20, A20, B20, C#21, D21, E21, F#21, G21, A21, B21, C#22, D22, E22, F#22, G22, A22, B22, C#23, D23, E23, F#23, G23, A23, B23, C#24, D24, E24, F#24, G24, A24, B24, C#25, D25, E25, F#25, G25, A25, B25, C#26, D26, E26, F#26, G26, A26, B26, C#27, D27, E27, F#27, G27, A27, B27, C#28, D28, E28, F#28, G28, A28, B28, C#29, D29, E29, F#29, G29, A29, B29, C#30, D30, E30, F#30, G30, A30, B30, C#31, D31, E31, F#31, G31, A31, B31, C#32, D32, E32, F#32, G32, A32, B32, C#33, D33, E33, F#33, G33, A33, B33, C#34, D34, E34, F#34, G34, A34, B34, C#35, D35, E35, F#35, G35, A35, B35, C#36, D36, E36, F#36, G36, A36, B36, C#37, D37, E37, F#37, G37, A37, B37, C#38, D38, E38, F#38, G38, A38, B38, C#39, D39, E39, F#39, G39, A39, B39, C#40, D40, E40, F#40, G40, A40, B40, C#41, D41, E41, F#41, G41, A41, B41, C#42, D42, E42, F#42, G42, A42, B42, C#43, D43, E43, F#43, G43, A43, B43, C#44, D44, E44, F#44, G44, A44, B44, C#45, D45, E45, F#45, G45, A45, B45, C#46, D46, E46, F#46, G46, A46, B46, C#47, D47, E47, F#47, G47, A47, B47, C#48, D48, E48, F#48, G48, A48, B48, C#49, D49, E49, F#49, G49, A49, B49, C#50, D50, E50, F#50, G50, A50, B50, C#51, D51, E51, F#51, G51, A51, B51, C#52, D52, E52, F#52, G52, A52, B52, C#53, D53, E53, F#53, G53, A53, B53, C#54, D54, E54, F#54, G54, A54, B54, C#55, D55, E55, F#55, G55, A55, B55, C#56, D56, E56, F#56, G56, A56, B56, C#57, D57, E57, F#57, G57, A57, B57, C#58, D58, E58, 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## CHAPTER 5

### *TAKING FLIGHT*

#### **Composer Biography**

Katelyn Vincent is a composer, educator, and performer based in Phoenix, AZ. She is currently directing a collaborative improvisors ensemble through Paradise Community College and Phoenix Conservatory of Music. As a performer, her music interests include classical piano, classical vocal, jazz studies, and saxophone. In May of 2019 she graduated with a M.M. in Music composition from Arizona State University. During her academic studies, she received multiple awards including the Wendel Diebel Music Performance Award from Colorado State University and a Teaching Excellence award from Arizona State University. She also received recognition with ASCAP's Herb Alpert Young Jazz Composer Award as an Honorable Mention for her big band piece "unfinished business".

Vincent is one of my closest friends. She and I met when we played next to each other in ASU's Concert Jazz Band. After connecting about our shared experience as women in jazz, we became cheerleaders for each other in times of apprehension regarding our own skill levels. Vincent was an instrumental with regards to the conception of this project. She was a sounding board for me as I brainstormed ideas of how to make it easier for women to participate in jazz improvisation. Her piece *Taking Flight* is an extremely well written collaboration of contemporary classical saxophone, improvisation, and jazz harmony.

## Program Note

My friend and colleague, Kristen Zelenak, commissioned *Taking Flight* as part of her dissertation project. The scope of her dissertation is to commission 6 female jazz composers to write music providing education-based improvisational experiences directed towards primarily classical musicians. We share a similar background with both of our initial training being rooted in “academic” and “classical” music, and both loved playing and listening to many other musics including jazz. Through this project Kristen has connected a diverse community of women and empowered them to each express their creative talents. She is recording each of these pieces at Tempest Recording with Clark Rigsby at the end of Spring 2022.

My piece is inspired by the beginning of our friendship. The music community had recently lost two students to suicide. I was a Music Theory TA for both of them, and shared performance space as a fellow saxophonist with one of them. My heart hurt. Our community felt the loss deeply. When I attended the funeral for Aubrey, I felt a huge wave of emotional release and healing during the group singing of “I’ll Fly Away”. We shared collective grief as we comforted each other through tears and hugs and music making. It was a powerful moment that impacted the way I show up as an educator — the Human *Being* is my first priority.

Following the summer of that loss, Kristen and I were seated next to each other in Jazz Band - it was fate. When I was younger and had the opportunity to play with another woman, I would feel simultaneously excited and terrified. It felt so unfamiliar to play sitting next to another female that it was almost as if my ego felt threatened that I was no longer the “outlier”. I have since had many lovely experiences with other female Jazz musicians and role models that I no longer feel that way (needless to say Kristen falls hard into this inspirational category of humans). Our friendship helped me to heal from the sadness I felt, and grow into a version of myself that feels empowered to be artistically authentic as a female jazz musician. I hope this act of self-acceptance encourages others to learn and grow and find their inner voice, so we may all speak our truths through our art.

Initially I wrote *Taking Flight* as four different sections, and then I developed it into a more through-composed transitional piece, moving through different emotional moments of processing loss. This piece explores the feelings of shock, stillness and isolation, the over-analysis and thought spiraling (I imagine this section like a humming bird taking flight, zipping to and fro) feelings of anger and frustration, and finally grief and mourning. Like a moment of divine clarity, the saxophone melodically interrupts the emotional process with a reference to the hymn from Aubrey’s funeral procession. This melody serves as a transition to a “Dizzy Blues Vamp”, emulating when we feel better after crying, and all we need is a little water and a hug from our friends. This project is both a dedication to the memory of Aubrey Martin, Nick Pompliano and all of the people who were touched by their lives, and a personal expression of gratitude for this opportunity to collaborate with my dear friend Kristen.

### **Technical/Performance Notes:**

One of the main goals of this commission was to provide a creative space for someone with little to no experience with improvising. To me, this meant allowing the freedom to improvise while also providing a lot of structure for those who may be more geared towards reading music. I tried to capture the essence of freedom by playing piano and comping chords and rhythmic figures to create the harmonic and groove based structures, and notating the variations of how I played through the different harmonies and progressions.

When I approached the soloistic elements for this piece, I decided to provide two very different opportunities for the saxophonist. First, I wanted to create space to explore sound and aesthetic without harmonic structure. To do this I improvised melodies on both piano and flute to hear the sound scapes and different gestures incorporated into the mid-section cadenza. Secondly, I wanted to incorporate a more traditional improvisational experience by using a blues-based vamp in the finale. There are multiple opportunities throughout the piece for both performers to take artistic liberties and be creative. In each improvisational section I offer the performer a blueprint to use what they'd like (as written) and create music from their perspective, should they feel compelled to improvise.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Katelyn Vincent, *Taking Flight* (2021).

## Performance Guide

*Taking Flight* by Katelyn Vincent is a through composed, ten-minute piece written for soprano saxophone and piano. Inspired by the death of two of her students, she wrote this contemporary work as a reflection of the emotions she felt during the grieving process. The piece is divided into four main sections; however, they are to be played as one continuous performance.

The first section “Flutter and float” has a simple ternary form, ABA. It begins with the main theme (A), then proceeds to a lengthy cadenza that can be performed as written or as an improvisation (B). In m. 46, the original theme (A) returns and the melody travels higher in range, with the phrase culminating on an altissimo A for the saxophonist. The second section “Swifter” has a slightly faster tempo and is technically more demanding for the saxophonist. Vincent quotes the main theme an octave higher than the first section. In m. 82 she introduces a simple, syncopated accompaniment in the piano as the saxophonist plays ascending thirty-second-note scale-based passages. Similar to the first section, the saxophone part builds higher in range, however, Vincent starts to add jazz and blues harmonic language throughout. The first two sections build to the peak of the entire work at m. 103.

The third section “Restless” serves as a transition from the classical contemporary component of the work to the blues vamp solo section. Vincent continues the syncopated piano part into this section and includes an optional piano improvisation over a vamp in m. 117. The saxophonist plays riffs derived from the hymn *I’ll Fly Away*, and the song is quoted at the end of the section in m. 138. This quote transitions the piece into the final section “Dizzy Blues Vamp.” The last part of the work is the optional saxophone

improvisation over an F blues vamp. She labels the vamp “dizzy” because of the frequent time signature changes, depicting a bass line that is mismatched and unsteady. Aside from providing scale examples for the improvisation, Vincent includes a written solo, giving the performer many options during this section. The last three measures are “played as written” and includes the final quote of *I’ll Fly Away*, bringing the piece to a close.

One of the most difficult aspects of this piece is matching the rhythms to the underlying pulse of the work. Vincent chooses to give slow tempos (quarter note equals 60 and 72) while layering difficult thirty-second note passages over them. This disjunction makes the rhythms of the piece challenging to learn. It is very helpful to use a metronome on the eighth note beat when learning and practicing these sections. Not only does this affect the saxophone part, but it affects ensemble precision. If both performers cannot feel the beat, some sections are almost impossible to play together. The phrase from m. 46-54 and m.76-82 are the two most difficult passages to put together. However, they are both very similar and having both performers feel the eighth note beat helps with potential ensemble problems. In this section, tears tend to happen during the saxophonist’s ties. While the saxophonist holds their ties, they must listen to the piano part to keep time. It is very helpful to write in the piano part for reference.

**Example 14:** *Taking Flight*, score, ensemble precision, m.45-47. Used with permission from the copyright holder.

The image shows a musical score for Saxophone (S. Sx.) and Piano (Pno.) for measures 45-47. The tempo is marked as quarter note = 60. The key signature has three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat). The time signature changes from 2/4 to 4/4 and back to 2/4. The Saxophone part features dynamic markings of *p*, *mp*, and *pp*, with a fermata over a note in measure 47. The Piano part features a dynamic marking of *p* and *pp*. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, ties, and articulation marks.

Vincent uses different extended techniques in this work and requires the saxophonist to use many glissandos to shift between intervals. She uses them to define style and explore the sonic capabilities of the saxophone. There are three ways she uses glissandos in this piece: slow pitch bends, voicing glissandos (combination of voice and fingers to create a smooth pitch bend), and finger glissandos (bending the pitch with only the fingers, creating a chromatic effect.) The slow pitch bends occur in the cadenza and are marked by a straight diagonal line. In two different phrases, the saxophonist ends their phrases by placing pitch bends on a high E and Eb respectively. Because these notes occur at the peak of their phrases, they can be treated like a fermata. When ready, the performer should use their voicing and slowly bend the pitch down as low as possible.

Voicing and finger glissandos occur throughout the piece. Vincent uses a straight diagonal line to define voice glissandos and a squiggly diagonal line to depict finger glissandos. Most of the notated markings work well for the saxophone, however there are some instances where achieving this technique is difficult. It is more challenging to perform an ascending voice bend and it can be helpful to use both the voice and fingers to



achieve this affect. The first voicing bend in m. 5 is a whole step from low Eb to F. It is hard to perform the glissando because of the small interval. It is helpful to slowly peel the fingers up on the right hand to transition from Eb to F chromatically. Another place to consider this technique is in m. 51. The performer bends from a high F to an altissimo A. It is best to play the F with the front fingering, lift fingers 1 and 2, and then place 2 and 3 down to play the high A, all while using the voicing technique to get a smooth connection.

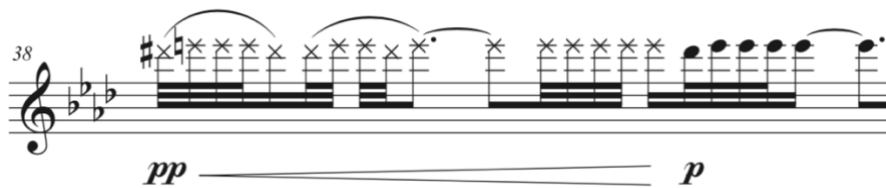
Other effects that Vincent uses to enhance the style of the piece involve articulation. She adds trills to long notes at the ends of phrases as a way of adding excitement and tension. Sometimes the notes with the trill tie into a note with a tenuto marking. This marking signifies the end of the trill and the performer should end their note as a straight tone with no vibrato. An example of this technique occurs in m. 109-110. The sixteenth note passage lands on a held-out F in the saxophone part. To give this long note direction and tension, Vincent includes a trill on the half note in m. 110. When the performer plays the held-out F, they should play it straight for two beats, trill for two beats, and then play straight for the final beat.

**Example 15:** *Taking Flight*, saxophone part, articulation clarification, m. 109-110. Used with permission from the copyright holder.



Another articulation technique that is used for sound and aesthetic occurs in the cadenza. Using an X as the notehead, Vincent gives the instruction to the performer to play with “almost no tone, air” at a pianissimo dynamic. Although there is a slur marked above these notes, it signifies the intended phrasing instead of articulation and all of the notes with an X should be tongued. To play this technique correctly, it is helpful to keep the embouchure loose to prevent the note from speaking. During the tied notes, the performer can slowly start to produce a tone by tightening their embouchure and pushing more air through the instrument. This technique is very difficult, especially with notes that lie in the palm key range. Transitioning from an air tone to a high pitch can be tricky if the performer is not using the correct voicing position. When this happens at m. 38 and m. 41, the performer should keep their lips forward to make the air sounds while their tongue remains high in the mouth to produce the tone.

**Example 16:** *Taking Flight*, saxophone part, articulation clarification, m. 38. Used with permission from the copyright holder.



## **Improvisation Guide**

The way Vincent has incorporated improvisation throughout this piece gives the performer the freedom to choose how much improvisation they are ready to include. All of these sections include written out examples which can be used as a blueprint for beginning improvisors. Performers can choose to play the written solos, combine phrases of Vincent's solo with their own, or play entirely original material. There are two main sections of improvisation in this piece including a cadenza at m. 22 and the blues-based vamp at m. 144.

The cadenza, which occurs towards the beginning of the work, is open-ended and can last as long as the performer wishes. The pianist is advised to set the pedal during the cadenza, creating an ethereal echo effect. This section is meant to serve as a space for the performer to explore sounds and aesthetic without any harmonic structure. Vincent uses this section to explore the emotions she felt when grieving the loss of her students by using extended techniques on the saxophone including pitch bends, trills, grace notes, air tones, and growls. She incorporates these techniques while expanding on themes presented earlier in the work. Because there is no accompaniment, the saxophonist can play anything they wish. This section will appeal to classical saxophonists who are familiar with contemporary literature. There are no ties to "jazz," therefore eliminating the pressure to conform to a certain style, harmony, or rhythm. This section is purely about improvising soundscapes and gestures. At the end of the cadenza, Vincent includes a phrase for the performer to play to transition back to the composed material. This brings the music back to the main theme to continue on to the next section.

The “Dizzy Blues Vamp” is an entirely different kind of improvisation section and it has a more traditional structure. A vamp is a short, repeating musical sequence often used for an accompaniment. Repeating in every measure of this section, the pianist plays a gesture that uses the same chord progression: Db7 to D7 to Eb minor 7 add 6. Vincent suggests three different scales to use as harmonic material that work well over these three chords. They include the F minor and F major blues scales and the C h/w diminished scale resolving to F Major. For new improvisors, it is helpful to spell out and memorize these scales.

**Table 9:** F Minor Blues, F Major Blues, and C h/w diminished scales

The image displays three musical scales on a treble clef staff. The first scale is labeled "F Minor Blues" and consists of the notes F, Ab, Bb, C, D, Eb, F. Below the notes are the fingering numbers: 1, b3, 4, 5, b7, 1. The second scale is labeled "F Major Blues" and consists of the notes F, Ab, Bb, B, C, D, Eb, F. Below the notes are the fingering numbers: 1, b3, 4, #4, 5, b7, 1. The third scale is labeled "C h/w diminished" and consists of the notes C, Db, Eb, F, G, Ab, Bb, C.

When I was learning these scales and improvising over this section, I also discovered other notes that sounded “good” over these chord changes. I kept favoring the D major blues scale in my solos. This scale fits in to an F6 chord with a split minor/major third and is another great option for melodic material.

**Table 10:** D Major Blues and F6 chord

The image displays two musical elements. On the left is the "D Major Blues" scale on a treble clef staff, consisting of the notes D, E, F#, G, A, B, C, D. Below the notes are the fingering numbers: 1, b3, 4, #4, 5, b7, 1. On the right is the "F6" chord, shown as a block chord on a treble clef staff with notes F, Ab, Bb, C, D, Eb.

A challenging aspect of the solo section aside from the harmony is the slow tempo. Similar to the problems earlier in the piece, a tempo of quarter note equals 60 can be difficult to maintain and may want to push ahead. Feeling the pulse in the eighth note and playing gestures with faster notes such as sixteenth and thirty-second notes can help with this problem. The style of the solo section should also have a swing feel and playing syncopated gestures that match the hymn *I'll Fly Away* can be helpful starting material. Studying Vincent's solo can also be very informational for beginning soloists. She writes gestures that arpeggiate the chords, uses half step grace notes to highlight certain notes, and plays with rhythm similar to passages earlier in the work.

Vincent also includes many time signature changes in the solo section, which can be tricky to manage, especially the two  $\frac{3}{8}$  bars. This technique is used to extend certain phrases and give the solo section rhythmic variety. To help navigate the "dizzy blues vamp," the performer should listen to the piano part to resolve during times of suspension. Playing along with the piano accompaniment track is also a great way to feel more comfortable with the time signature changes.

The improvisation in *Taking Flight* creates many different possibilities for the beginning improviser. This piece closely resembles contemporary classical saxophone literature and performers will feel comforted in this medium exploring the two improvisation sections. Sample solos provide an extra layer of assistance while simultaneously encouraging performers to explore their own compositional endeavors.

## CHAPTER 6

### *DES-DUES*

#### **Composer Biography**

Sam Spear is a woodwind instrumentalist, composer, arranger, and educator based in Boston, MA. She creates music that explores the broad spectrum of the jazz idiom. During the pandemic she has released several recordings and was a member of the 2021 JEN Sisters in Jazz Collegiate Combo. As an educator, she is passionate about making quality musical training accessible to all ages and teaches privately across greater Boston from fourth grade beginners to undergrad music majors. She was recently appointed to the faculty of Berklee College of Music as an assistant professor of Contemporary Writing and Production. Her research interests include gender equality in the jazz community and her advocacy work has been featured at conferences, *Downbeat Magazine*, and on local news stations. She co-founded Women in Jazz Collective at Berklee College of Music with the mission of empowering female and non-binary jazz musicians. Her full bio can be found at <https://samspearmusic.com/about>.

Spear's music and advocacy work was recommended to me by her teacher, Ayn Inerto. When I met with Spear, I immediately sensed her dedication and understanding of gender inequality in jazz. As a fellow saxophonist, she understood the pressures I have felt with regard to improvisation, missing a feeling of belonging, and the pressures of representing a gender within your own performance. Her piece, *Des-dues*, pays tribute to Mamie Desdunes, a woman ahead of her time, that paved the way for future female musicians to thrive in a male dominated community.

## Program Note

### Background

When Kristen Zelenak approached me about her idea for this project, I was excited for a variety of reasons. First, I was eager about the prospect of writing a piece to bridge the divide between the “classical” and “jazz” saxophone worlds. To me, both of these traditions are exquisite on their own, and the potential for their cross-pollination knows no bounds. I must acknowledge that this mingling of “classical” and “jazz” has been explored extensively. I owe particular thanks to Gunther Schuller, whose music and philosophy of the “complete musician” has had a tremendous impact on me personally and on countless musicians who came after him, showing us what is possible when creating music equally informed by these distinct traditions. Of course, this practice of mixing music of various styles and origins well predates 1957, the year Schuller coined the term “Third Stream” in a lecture at Brandeis University. It easily goes back hundreds of years, and quite likely further.

Secondly, I was taken by Kristen’s idea to commemorate a woman in jazz with this work. When we started discussing this commission, I was spending significant time reading about and listening to Ferdinand “Jelly Roll” Morton. While exploring Morton and Alan Lomax’s legendary 1938 Library of Congress recordings, I came across the story of Mamie Desdunes, a pianist and singer who had a profound impact on Morton’s musical development. According to Morton, Desdunes introduced him to:

... among the first blues that I’ve ever heard, happened to be a woman that lived next door to my godmother in the Garden District. Her name was Mamie Desdunes. On her right hand, she had her two middle fingers between her forefingers cut off and she played with the three.

So she played a blues like this all day long like this when she first would get up in the morning. [1]

Then Morton launched into an ornate rendition of *Mamie’s Blues*, supported by a tango-inspired bass ostinato, a texture which he referred to as the “Spanish Tinge” and considered an essential element of jazz aesthetic.

The following year, Morton made a commercial recording of *Mamie’s Blues*. Musically, this rendition was more distilled. Like the Library of Congress recording, Morton supplied a spoken introduction, shedding further light on Desdunes and his initiation to the blues:

This is the first blues I had no doubt heard in my life. Mamie Desdunes, this was her favorite blues. She hardly could play anything else more, but she could really play this number. Of course, to get in on it, to try to learn it, I made myself the can rusher. [2]

This anecdote is profound to me for a variety of reasons. For one, paying your dues is a deeply rooted tradition in “jazz,” hence the title *Des-dues*. Most musicians spend many

years studying and apprenticing more established artists – paying dues – to refine their craft and absorb the knowledge, wisdom, and history passed on to them. Morton is known, somewhat infamously, for declaring that he single-handedly invented jazz in 1902. He was defensive of this claim, calling out his detractors, perhaps most notably W.C. Handy, best known for *St. Louis Blues*. Yet, here is Morton paying homage to one of his musical predecessors. Not only that, but he was so devoted to learning from Desdunes that he took the thankless job of distributing alcohol in “The District” as a young boy in New Orleans.

This piece is my humble attempt to commemorate Mamie Desdunes, a woman who continued to create and inspire against all odds – losing two fingers in her right hand, enduring relentless racism and sexism, and working in the conditions afforded by Storyville, New Orleans at the turn of the 20th century. It is my hope that this composition honors her memory and influence on the soundscape of American music. There are hundreds – perhaps thousands – of Mamie Desdunes in our lineage, those whose names we do not know and whose contributions are indelible.

May we continue to seek out these names and stories to preserve our history and leave a richer world behind.

### Musical Symbolism

I infused this composition with many musical elements relating to Mamie Desdunes, Ferdinand “Jelly Roll” Morton, and *Mamie’s Blues*. The pulse – the heartbeat – of this piece is the tango-inspired “Spanish Tinge” rhythm.

This is the same ostinato figure Morton uses when performing *Mamie’s Blues* in the 1938 Library of Congress recording, presumably emulating Desdunes’ own artistic choices.

In both of Morton’s recordings of *Mamie’s Blues*, he supports the melody with slight reharmonizations on the blues form. I expand upon this idea by increasing the intensity and complexity of the reharmonizations with each passing chorus, erupting into a saxophone solo, during which the blues form begins to unravel.

The second blues chorus, starting at measure 37, has a piano accompaniment texture emphasizing 6ths both melodically and harmonically, a nod to Morton’s stylings on both *Mamie’s Blues* recordings.

One of Mamie Desdunes’ iconic features was her three-fingered right hand. I have written various musical elements in groups of three throughout the piece – three-note voicings, triplet rhythms, three-measure phrases, and a singular 3/4 measure.

Another motive that appears throughout the piece is an interjection inspired by *Tiger Rag* – “hold that tiger.” In his essential memoir *Mister Jelly Roll: The Fortunes of Jelly Roll Morton, New Orleans Creole and “Inventor of Jazz,”* Alan Lomax explains:



In barrelhouse lingo “tiger” meant the lowest hand a man could draw in a poker game – seven high, deuce low, and without a pair, straight, or flush. It takes nerve to hold on to a tiger and bluff it to win, but Jelly Roll had the nerve to take the pot with bluff alone. ... All he had was the music of the Storyville bordellos – it was his tiger and he bet his life on it (84).[3]

In spite of the hands they had been dealt, Desdunes and Morton contributed immeasurably to the wellspring of American music that we continue to draw from and be nourished by to this day.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Sam Spear, *Des-dues* (Sam Spear Press, ASCAP, 2021).

## Performance Guide

*Des-dues*, written for alto saxophone and piano, by Sam Spear is an eight minute, through composed work based on “Jelly Roll” Morton’s *Mamie’s Blues*. In this piece, Spear decided to commemorate Mamie Desdunes, a pianist and singer from New Orleans who had a profound impact on Morton’s musical development. According to Morton, Desdunes (who lived down the street from his godmother) introduced him to the first blues he ever heard.<sup>17</sup> Morton is arguably the first jazz composer and scholar, and his tune pays homage to one of his musical predecessors, Desdunes. This tradition of “paying your dues” is a deeply rooting tradition in jazz, hence the title of this piece, *Des-dues*. This piece is Spear’s “humble attempt to commemorate Mamie Desdunes, a woman who continued to create and inspire against all odds—losing two fingers in her right hand and enduring relentless racism and sexism [...] in New Orleans at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.”<sup>18</sup>

Arguably, this work is the closest piece related to “jazz” in the collection. It is mostly based off the 12-bar blues in regard to form and harmony. The pulse and heartbeat of this piece is inspired by the tango “Spanish tinge” rhythm that Morton uses as the bass ostinato in *Mamie’s Blues*.

### Example 17: “Spanish tinge” rhythm



When learning this piece, it is helpful for the performer to understand the phrase map and structure of the work as a whole. Spear introduces the “Spanish tinge” ostinato

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<sup>17</sup> Spear, *Des-dues*.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

in the first three phrases, then uses the 12-bar blues form in F to establish the melodic theme. She includes a solo section where she extends the 12-bar blues form utilizing substitutions and half-step voice leading. From there, the piece transitions to a lengthy written-out saxophone cadenza. Spear continues to develop the melodic theme and includes a rubato piano transition back to the recapitulation presented an octave higher. She ends the piece as it begins, including a seven-measure improvisation over the simple bass ostinato in F.

**Table 11:** *Des-dues* phrase map

Phrase Map: <i>Des-dues</i>		
Form	Measure	Description
Introduction of "Spanish tinge" ostinato	m. 1-8	Piano only
	m. 9-16	Saxophone and piano in unison
	m. 17-24	Saxophone improvisation over ostinato
12 bar blues in F	m. 25-36	First blues chorus and introduction of theme
	m. 37-48	Second blues chorus including Morton piano stylings
12 measure transition	m. 49-60	Prolongation of Bb (IV) to C7 (V7) setting up the solo section in F (I)
Solo section	m. 61-80	Expansion of 12 bar blues in F utilizing substitutions and voiceleading
8 measure transition	m. 81-89	Piano only: transition material out of solo section in Db minor.
16 measure phrase	m. 89-104	Saxophone development of melodic theme
Cadenza	m. 105-131	Saxophone cadenza
22 measure phrase	m. 132-153	New melodic material in piano while saxophone plays the ostinato
16 measure phrase	m. 154-169	Back to "spanish tinge" ostinato in piano under saxophone melody (in F)
16 measure transition	m. 170-185	Piano only: tubato eighth note transition to recapitulation
22 measure phrase	m. 186-207	Recapitulation up an octave
11 measure phrase	m. 208-218	Last improvisation section over repeating ostinato to end the piece

There are many aspects of performance to consider in regard to style, phrasing, and ensemble precision. The style of this piece is defined by the articulation. Since *Des-dues* is based on tango, the eighth notes should be played straight, not swung. The performer should prioritize the written articulation markings and match them with traditional jazz style. The tongue should be very active while defining the different types of accents. Regular accents should be start with the tongue followed by a burst of air. Marcato accents are similar; however, they are usually shorter and should end with a tongue stop. It is important that both the pianist and saxophonist match style with each

other. Also, playing with proper articulation helps highlight the rhythmic syncopation in the work. It can be harder to achieve the proper articulation if the saxophonist is playing on a classical mouthpiece. The performer should play this piece on whichever mouthpiece is most comfortable to them, however they will need to exaggerate the articulations further on a classical mouthpiece to achieve the desired effect.

I was very torn with the decision to use vibrato in this piece. In standard jazz, it is uncommon for saxophones to play with vibrato. However, the pieces in this collection are not meant to be either classical or jazz, and I think the decision should lie with the performer. Personally, I think this piece can be played with vibrato and I use it throughout the work. It can enhance phrasing and add color to longer notes. I chose to use vibrato while playing the melodic theme and the cadenza. I chose not to use it during the solo sections and while playing the “Spanish tinge” ostinato.

The cadenza of *Des-dues* is divided into four phrases and the use of rubato by the saxophonist is crucial for connectivity and phrasing. Spear gives the instructions to “accel.” and “rall.” the triplet eighth note passage during the first phrase in m. 105-111. It is helpful to start playing the triplets very slow before accelerating to set up an organic phrase. In m. 112-119, the saxophonist arpeggiates the diminished chords in the pattern: B#°7, C#°, D#°, C#°. This progression is performed twice and should not be played the same way each time. When I perform this passage, I play the first four measures with drama at a slow tempo and give attention to the changing rhythm and harmony. When the gesture repeats, I accelerate the first three measures and pull back on the last measure to give closure to the entire phrase. The third phrase from m. 120-123 should be played similar to the first one in m. 105. The last phrase of the cadenza is a challenging

transition into the next section of the piece. The saxophonist plays an accelerating bass line that includes large leaps and fast changing articulations. The dynamic markings and marcato accents indicate that the lower notes should take priority. It is helpful to play the top notes as soft as possible to highlight the rhythm of the lower notes, which is the “Spanish tinge” ostinato hidden among the phrase. It is very difficult to play these eight measures in one breath. I advise the performer to take the largest breath possible before starting this passage and if they need to take another one, they should take it before beat four in m. 126.

There are a few places where ensemble precision is tricky to manage. Because of the syncopated rhythms in the piano part, the underlying beat can sometimes feel unstable. This occurs throughout the piece and there are two places of which to be cognizant, in particular. In m. 49, both the saxophone and piano parts are tied across the bar-line. Because the piano part is syncopated, there is no downbeat present in m. 50. This rhythm can make it very difficult for the saxophonist to release their tie and come in on the quarter note triplets correctly. The saxophonist should write the pianist’s rhythm in their part and subdivide during the whole note.

**Example 18:** *Des-dues*, score, ensemble precision, m. 49-52. Used with permission from the copyright holder.

The image shows a musical score for measures 49-52. The top staff is for the Saxophone (A. Sx.) and the bottom two staves are for the Piano (Pno.).

- Measure 49:** The saxophone part begins with a whole note chord (F#4, A4, C5) and continues with a melodic line of eighth notes: F#4, A4, C5, B4, A4, G4, F#4, E4. The piano part has a syncopated rhythm with chords: F#4-A4-C5, G4-B4, F#4-A4-C5, G4-B4, F#4-A4-C5, G4-B4, F#4-A4-C5, G4-B4.
- Measure 50:** The saxophone part continues with a whole note chord (F#4, A4, C5) and a melodic line of eighth notes: F#4, A4, C5, B4, A4, G4, F#4, E4. The piano part continues with syncopated chords: F#4-A4-C5, G4-B4, F#4-A4-C5, G4-B4, F#4-A4-C5, G4-B4, F#4-A4-C5, G4-B4.
- Measure 51:** The saxophone part continues with a whole note chord (F#4, A4, C5) and a melodic line of eighth notes: F#4, A4, C5, B4, A4, G4, F#4, E4. The piano part continues with syncopated chords: F#4-A4-C5, G4-B4, F#4-A4-C5, G4-B4, F#4-A4-C5, G4-B4, F#4-A4-C5, G4-B4.
- Measure 52:** The saxophone part continues with a whole note chord (F#4, A4, C5) and a melodic line of eighth notes: F#4, A4, C5, B4, A4, G4, F#4, E4. The piano part continues with syncopated chords: F#4-A4-C5, G4-B4, F#4-A4-C5, G4-B4, F#4-A4-C5, G4-B4, F#4-A4-C5, G4-B4.

Dynamic markings: *cresc. poco a poco* for the saxophone and *p cresc. poco a poco* for the piano.

The other situation where syncopation plays an issue is from m. 95-99. In this instance, the rhythmic ostinato changes in the piano part while the saxophone part stays the same. In m. 96 and 98, the saxophone rests on beat two and enters on beat three. In m. 96, the piano plays their chord on the second eighth note of beat two as opposed to on beat two in m. 98. This discrepancy can cause the saxophonist to hesitate on their entrance, therefore causing a tear in the ensemble. The pianist can help the saxophonist with their entrance by exaggerating the accents on these separate rhythms. This is also another spot where the saxophonist might benefit from writing in the pianist's rhythms for reference.

**Example 19:** *Des-dunes*, score, ensemble precision, m. 95-99. Used with permission from the copyright holder.<sup>19</sup>

The image shows a musical score for Example 19, consisting of three staves. The top staff is for the saxophone, and the bottom two staves are for the piano. The score is in 4/4 time and features a key signature of one sharp (F#). The saxophone part begins in measure 95 with a melodic line. In measure 96, it rests on beat two and enters on beat three. The piano part features a rhythmic ostinato that changes between measures 96 and 98. The score includes dynamic markings such as 'mf' and 'A' (accents) to highlight specific rhythmic elements. The saxophone part continues through measure 99.



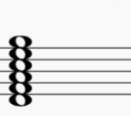
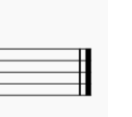
<sup>19</sup> The saxophone and top piano staff is treble clef and the bottom staff is bass clef.

## Improvisation Guide

The improvisation involved in *Des-dues* involves many extended harmonies and might be challenging for performers who do not have jazz theory knowledge. Spear makes this piece accessible to beginning improvisors by including pitch sets, phrase directions, and a sample solo. Learning this work is a great opportunity for players who would like to advance their knowledge of jazz theory and dive into more complicated chord progressions.

Spear includes three different improvisation sections in *Des-dues*. The first section appears towards the beginning of the tune after the “Spanish tinge” ostinato is established. In m. 17, the saxophonist improvises for seven measures over the bass ostinato. Spear gives the instructions to play a “sparse, floating improvisation with pitch cluster” which means that the solo can be simple, both in terms of notes and rhythm. Spear suggests four notes: (concert) G, Ab, C, and Db. Although she does not provide the performer with the chord changes, it is helpful to know that each measure alternates between an Fmin9(b13) and a DbMaj9. The notes involved in the pitch cluster are all common tones between these two chords. Example 34 spells out the extended harmonies and example 35 helps explain the relationship of the four notes in the pitch cluster in regard to their function in the respective harmonies.

**Table 12:** Chord Spelling, m. 17-23.

Concert Pitch		Saxophonist's Key (Eb)	
Fmin9(b13)	DbMaj9	Dmin9(b13)	BbMaj9
			

**Table 13:** Pitch cluster relationship, m.17-23.

Concert Pitch			Saxophonist's Key (Eb)		
Pitch Cluster Note	Fmin9(b13)	DbMaj9	Pitch Cluster Note	Dmin9(b13)	BbMaj9
Db	b13	1	Bb	b13	1
C	5	Maj 7	A	5	Maj 7
Ab	min 3	5	F	min 3	5
G	9	(#11)	E	9	(#11)

The main “solo section” and second improvisation of *Des-dues* occurs from m. 61-80. This twenty-measure section is based on an extended version of the 12-bar blues in F that was presented earlier in the piece. To understand the form of Spear’s eccentric version of the blues, it is helpful to compare the form of her version with the basic 12-bar blues.

**Table 14:** Blues form comparison

12-Bar Blues			
I	///	///	///
IV	///	I	///
V	IV	I	///

<i>Des-dues</i> Solo Section Blues			
vi	sub V7/VI	vi	sub V7/V
v	V+7/II	II7sus-bII7sus	V7sus/IV-subV7/IV
IV7	///	iv	///
I	///	VI maj-V7/II	ii/V-V7/II
ii	///	V7	///

In this solo section, it is not always helpful to think of the root of the chord as it relates to the tonic. Spear creates some chords to be heard as secondary dominants (non-tonic V7 chords approaching a diatonic chord from a 5th above) or substitute dominants (non-tonic V7 chords approaching a diatonic chord from a half step above). Spear’s blues starts with a Dmin11 chord in m. 61, which is the vi of F. In this instance, the vi is serving as a tonic function and acts the same as a I. Instead of moving to the IV in the



fifth measure, she adds four extra measures of secondary dominant harmonic material prepping for the arrival of IV in m. 69. The I finally arrives in m. 73, however it has a major quality instead of dominant. Instead of using V-IV-I in the last four measures, Spear introduces a ii-V progression, each chord lasting two measures. When repeating the solo section, the concert C7(#9) during the last two measures functions as a bVII7 chord approaching the concert D min, but when moving on, it is retroactively heard as concert Ab7sus/C, the V7 of the next chord, concert Db min.

Spear gives the performer the right-hand piano voicing as a pitch collection to guide their improvisation. The notes suggested include the 3<sup>rd</sup> (major or minor) the 7<sup>th</sup> (major or dominant) and any extensions (11, #9, b13, etc.). Utilizing the half step relationship between these guide tones from chord to chord is a great way to navigate the changes. Embellishing a melody using these tones can be a helpful first step in approaching this improvisation section. Other source material for note selection includes arpeggiating chords and playing the related scales.

This solo section includes a repeat. Performers can choose how many choruses they wish to solo over. Spear also includes a written-out solo for one chorus of this section. Studying her solo can help new improvisors who may feel intimidated by the complexity of the chord changes. Performers have the option of performing her chorus as well as their own.

Spear's *Des-dues* gives new improvisors ample information about how to approach jazz harmony while constructing their solos. With the repeated solo section, performers are allowed more freedom. As they begin to understand the changes better, they can expand on their improvisation knowledge. I could see the pedagogy used to

write this piece expanded to big band charts and create a standard to provide all soloists with entry level information along with standard chord changes.

## CHAPTER 7

### *JOGO*

#### **Composer Biography**

Yoko Suzuki is a jazz pianist and composer from Yokohama, Japan. She studied the Yamaha Electone for 10 years and was inspired to teach herself jazz piano after hearing it for the first time in middle school. In 2013, Suzuki studied jazz piano under the mentorship of Makoto Ozone and Satoru Shionoya at Kunitachi College of Music. Her music has been performed by the JFC All Star Band and has won multiple awards including Downbeat Magazine's Student Music Award, the ASCAP Foundation Herb Alpert Young Jazz Composer Award, and more. She graduated from Berklee College of Music in 2020 with a degree in Jazz Composition and Performance. Suzuki currently lives in Japan and keeps an active performing and composing career in the Tokyo area

I met Suzuki through her teacher, Ayn Inserto. She was intrigued with writing a piece for the baritone saxophone, because it is often associated with male performers. Her writing style includes rhythmically compelling material and beautiful piano lines. I gave Suzuki the freedom to write a piece in any style so long as it had some improvisation included. Her piece, *Jogo* is an exciting work that features the baritone saxophone as a strong solo instrument that includes altissimo, lively articulated passages, and a robust rhythmic drive.

## Program Note

The title “Jogo” is the name of the woman from the Japanese movie “Kakekomi.” In Edo period, women couldn’t divorce unless their husbands asked them to, but there was only one way to divorce with the wives’ wills, which they had to escape to one particular temple, called Tokeiji and be trained for 2 years to ensure that they could live their life independently without a partner.

Jogo was one of the women who wanted to divorce because of her husband’s insincerity, resulting her to escape to Tokeiji. I was very impressed by how she stands strongly despite all of the barriers she had especially in that period women didn’t have much freedom.

Also, Ms. Toshiko Akiyoshi, a well-known and respected female jazz composer from Japan was the big part of my inspiration for this composition. Her way to feature solo melodies and her harmonies reminds me of Japanese music and jazz at the same time motivated me so much.

Therefore, I used the traditional Japanese scale with the minor blues chords to express their “blues” feelings. I didn’t want to make piano and saxophone sound like an accompanying instrument and a soloist. This piece includes a lot of interplay section, which is what I love about Jazz music.

The improvisation section is only using 1 minimalistic chord change and builds up slowly. This is the space where a saxophonist can express their emotion as they wish, mimicking Jogo’s emotion when she was in the temple meeting the other women who have different reasons to be there and to become stronger together.

I hope this piece touches everybody’s heart and give strength to the women who are struggling to stand on their feet and to fight what is right.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Yoko Suzuki, email to author, November 24, 2021.

## Performance Guide

*Jogo* by Yoko Suzuki is a nine minute, through-composed piece written for baritone saxophone and piano. This work is written in the key of g minor and features a 12/8 key signature. Suzuki uses the “traditional Japanese scale” as the tonal basis of the melody. This pentatonic scale is also known as the “Miyako-bushi scale” that is commonly used in Japanese folk songs.<sup>21</sup> The scale is comprised of 1, b2, 4, 5, and b6, or concert D, Eb, G, A and Bb. Suzuki used this scale because it has a similar sound to the blues scale and was perfect for depicting the “blues” of *Jogo*’s emotions.

This is the only piece in the collection written exclusively in compound meter. The piece is based on two different motives that are developed throughout. However, the defining component of this work is the use of rhythm, specifically in regard to syncopation and rubato. Suzuki develops themes by stretching them out, tying notes across bar lines, and using rhythmic hemiolas. There are also many sections of rubato playing by both performers allowing for rhythmic freedom and expression. In this piece, Suzuki includes one solo section based on a simple chord progression.

The form of this piece can almost be described as a five-part rondo; however, the melodic material presents itself in a slightly different way. Instead of the traditional ABACA used in the classical period, Suzuki uses a version of ABCBA. To understand the structure of this work, it is helpful to refer to the phrase map.

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<sup>21</sup> Yoko Suzuki, email to author, August 29, 2022.

**Table 16:** *Jogo* Phrase Map, form definition.

<i>Jogo</i> Phrase Map		
Form	Measure	Description
A	m. 1-17	Introduction of first melodic material. Saxophone only
	m. 18-31	Piano enters. Slightly faster tempo.
(Transition)	m. 32-41	Piano transition hinting at "B" melodic material
A	m. 42-54	A melody presented at the faster tempo
B	m. 55-80	Introduction of B material
Solo Section (B)	m. 83-119	Saxophone Solo section (can use B theme for solo material)
Piano Interlude (B)	m. 120-136	Piano transition using B melodic material
B	m. 136-153	Development of B in saxophone part
C	m. 154-166	Rhythmic unison break in saxophone and piano part
Saxophone Cadenza	m. 167-173	Rubato saxophone cadenza
B	m. 174-190	Rubato saxophone B melody over sparse piano chords
	m. 191-20	Development of B in saxophone part in faster tempo
A	m. 210-234	Final A melody presented in the key of f# minor

When learning *Jogo*, there are many aspects of performance to consider including ensemble precision, style and phrasing, and intonation. The interplay between the saxophone and piano parts are a significant element of this work. However, Suzuki's playful use of rhythm can cause some challenges when lining up the two parts. For example, the piano transition leading into m. 18 utilizes tied eighth notes in a duple meter. This rhythm differs from the 12/8 feel of the melodic line that preceded it. As the piano line progresses, Suzuki also adds an *accelerando* leading into the next phrase. The hemiola used in combination with this *accelerando* could make the downbeat in m. 18 difficult to place for the saxophonist.

**Example 20:** *Jogo*, score, ensemble precision, m. 15-18. Used with permission from the copyright holder.

To help line up the downbeat of m. 18, it would likely help the saxophonist to start subdividing in duple meter at m. 15. While preparing for their next entrance, they could listen to the pianist’s left hand bass line, particularly beat four of m. 17. The pianist can also emphasize their eighth notes on beat four in the right hand by saving their crescendo until the end of the measure. Playing these two notes in the new tempo also helps to set up the downbeat in m. 18.

Suzuki frequently employs unison lines between the saxophone and piano throughout the work. In some instances, difficult rhythmic writing can be problematic for the performers. The section from m. 154-167 is an example of this challenging unison writing. The melody includes notes on off beats, ties across bar lines, and grace notes. These elements alone make a rhythmically ambitious melody, however when having the saxophone and piano play in unison, it enhances the difficulty. The example from m. 158-163 shows all three elements combined.

**Example 21:** *Jogo*, score, ensemble precision, m.158-163. Used with permission from the copyright holder.

The image shows a musical score for two instruments: Bari. Sax. (Bass Saxophone) and Pno. (Piano). The score is divided into two systems, measures 158-161 and 162-163. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 3/4. The Bari. Sax. part features a melodic line with eighth notes and rests, often with grace notes. The Pno. part provides a rhythmic accompaniment with eighth notes and rests, mirroring the saxophone's phrasing. The notation includes various articulation marks such as slurs and accents.

For this section to work, both players need to be subdividing in triple meter. The use of grace notes before ties might cause rhythmic ambiguity. For the sequence in m. 59 to line up, it is helpful that both players are aware whether the grace note falls before the beat or before an offbeat. Marking where the beats are with a line above the note can help the performers manage these elements and it gives them some sense of rhythmic stability. Matching the articulation of the eight notes can also help with precision. Eight notes followed by a rest should be played staccato. Metronome practice is also beneficial while learning this passage. Be careful to avoid compressing the tied notes, causing the melody to rush.

Another aspect of performance to take into consideration refers to the style and phrasing of the piece. In this work, Suzuki switches between free sections of rubato and rhythmically driving material. To highlight the differences between these two sections, it is important to define each of them with articulation and vibrato. There are two sections labeled “tempo rubato” where the saxophonist performs the melody unaccompanied. The first one is an initial statement of the theme and the second acts as a cadenza transition later in the piece. These rubato sections should be played with legato articulation and the phrasing should be smooth and connected. This is indicated by the phrase lines, slurs, and



tenuto markings. Accents in these sections should be emphasized more with the air rather than the tongue. The tongue should have minimal involvement and the air stream should dictate phrasing. Vibrato could be used throughout the rubato sections to enhance the intimate style, particularly on held out notes. Using a wide and fast vibrato will mimic an operatic voice in these sections and add beauty to the simple melodic line.

In contrast, the rhythmically driving “Animato” sections of *Jogo* include a more active articulation. The tongue should be heavily involved in defining the articulation, particularly in regard to the accents. Suzuki differentiates accents by placing a staccato or legato marking underneath them. When an accent has a staccato marking, it should be treated as a marcato accent where the tongue starts and stops the note. A legato under the accent means that the note should have a strong front and be longer in length than a regular accent. Eighth notes that do not have an articulation marking could also be played staccato to emphasize the triple rhythms. When the rhythm includes a quarter note followed by an eighth note, the quarter note should be played long, and the eighth note should be played short. Playing the quarter notes long helps to define the style and triple meter of the animato section.

**Example 22:** *Jogo*, saxophone part, articulation clarification, m. 154-156. Used with permission from the copyright holder.



Along with using more defined articulations to bring out the style of the “animato” sections, the saxophonist’s use of vibrato should be limited. Because the music

is driven by the complex compound rhythms, adding too much vibrato takes the listener's attention away from the interplay of the saxophone and piano parts. There are many moments in this piece where both voices are equally important, and by taking out the saxophonist's vibrato, both parts can have similar timbre, phrasing, and clarity.

The last performance element to discuss regarding *Jogo*, is navigating the pitch tendencies of the baritone saxophone. Intonation between the saxophone and piano can be difficult in this piece. This work is in the key of E minor for the saxophone, and the fundamental pitches of this scale can be very out of tune for this instrument. Suzuki uses the minor triad as a basis for her melody. The saxophone lands on their middle E many times throughout this work. Middle E on baritone saxophone is very sharp. It is crucial for the performer to take this into consideration, especially during phrase endings. They must voice the note down to avoid being out of tune when the melody ends on the tonic, especially when it is played in unison with the piano. Middle B and G, the fifth and minor third of the home key, tend to be flat notes for the baritone saxophone. To help raise the pitch it is helpful for the saxophonist to keep a firm embouchure and "lip up" the flat notes. For middle g, the performer can add the alternate F# key to vent the pitch and raise it into position. Although it is simple to fix these pitch problems individually, it can be very difficult to adjust voicing when the melody involves a combination of flat and sharp pitches. Slow practice with a drone can help the performer manage these pitch tendencies. For certain phrases, they can even push their mouthpiece in if the melody notes still sound under pitch.

In her sample solo, Suzuki explores some of the altissimo range of the baritone saxophone. Specifically, she uses high F#, G, and A. Playing these notes too loudly can

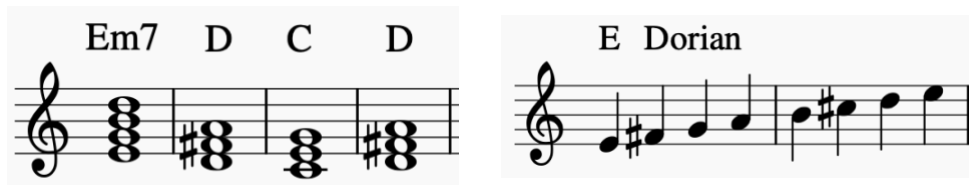
cause them to be flat. If the performer is having issues, they can play the higher notes softer, knowing that they will still be heard because of their brighter timbre. Playing altissimo passages down the octave can also help the performer conceptualize the intonation. Alternating between octaves gives the saxophonist a tonal reference when playing in the altissimo register.

## Improvisation Guide

The solo section in *Jogo* occurs towards the front half of the piece. It is thirty-two measures long and consists of one simple chord progression. This progression lasts four measures and every measure marks a new chord change. The progression of the chords includes: Em7, D, C, and D. To help the performer navigate this solo section, Suzuki provides a sample solo and one scale to use that works over the entire section, the E Dorian scale.

To understand the tonal material to use for this solo, the performer can outline the chords provided. When Suzuki writes a chord symbol with no extra indications, I interpret that chord as a major scale/triad. Spelling out the scales and chords gives the performer a visual representation of what can be used for melodic material in their solo.

**Table 17:** *Jogo*, chord and scale spelling



The image displays two musical notations on a five-line staff. The left notation shows four chords: Em7, D, C, and D. Each chord is represented by a vertical stack of notes on the staff. The right notation shows the E Dorian scale, represented by a sequence of notes on the staff: E, F#, G, A, B, C, D.

Although Suzuki gives the E Dorian scale as an example to use in this section, it would be best for the performer to avoid using C# when the chord progression is in the key of C. C# works in the D sections because it is the major seventh. The improviser can play around with this half step motion when the chords change from D to C if they wish.

Because the chord changes are simple in this section, it gives the performer freedom to explore rhythm. Since this piece is mostly characterized by the playful rhythms, it is fitting that this theme is continued into the solo section. Suzuki's sample

solo provides an excellent example of how rhythm can be explored using the simple progression. She uses melodic sequencing, hemiolas, and ties over bar lines to keep the rhythm exciting.

There are many ways the performer can use the sample solo. The 32-measure solo section might seem daunting to a new improviser. By playing the sample solo for some of this section, it frees up the performer to transition into playing a solo of their own.

Personally, I enjoyed how Suzuki crafted this solo and I chose to perform most of it.

However, I did add 12 measures of my own solo into hers. I continued the melodic and rhythmic framework of the solo she started and I developed it in my own voice. This is a great first step to take when learning how to improvise. For my solo, I used the compositional tools that Suzuki outlines earlier in the piece including melodic sequencing and rhythms that are tied over bar lines.

**Example 23:** *Jogo*, Zelenak solo, compositional elements

The image displays three staves of musical notation in 12/8 time. The first staff contains measures 1-4 with chords Em7, D, C, and D. The second staff contains measures 5-8 with chords Em7, D, C, and D. The third staff contains measures 9-12 with chords Em7, D, C, and D. The melody features various rhythmic patterns, including eighth and sixteenth notes, and rests, with some notes tied across bar lines.

A mature approach to creating the saxophonist's solo material would keep in mind the music being played by the pianist. Suzuki builds this solo section using rhythm and dynamics. To add excitement, she progressively adds more complex rhythms to the piano part and gradually crescendos from piano to forte. It is easiest to conceptualize this

build in the piano part in three sections. At the beginning of the solo, Suzuki includes a sparse piano accompaniment that places emphasis on the downbeats of every measure, highlighting the chord changes. This first section is 16 measures long and lasts for half of the solo section. The thin piano texture allows the soloist ample room to explore melody and rhythm without worrying about a busy piano accompaniment.

In the second section, the left hand of the piano part plays a rhythmic hemiola that outlines the I and V of each chord. This extra line gives the piano part a thicker texture and adds a new composite rhythm. In this section, the soloist can intertwine their solo with the piano accompaniment to highlight the interplay that was referenced earlier in the piece.

The last section of the piano accompaniment includes a driving rhythmic line in the right hand, and a simple bass line outlining I and V in the left. Because the driving rhythm is so prominent in the piano part, it may be work well if the saxophonist crafts their solo using longer notes. Suzuki achieves this build in her sample solo by exploring the higher range of the saxophone. She uses chord tones in her melodic sequencing to stretch out the melody of the final section. Example 44 shows the differences in the piano accompaniment for the three sections.

**Example 24:** *Jogo*, score, piano accompaniment comparison, m. 84, 100, 108. Used with permission from the copyright holder.<sup>22</sup>

*Jogo*'s playful rhythmic feel and simple harmony inspires creativity when it comes to improvisation. I have enjoyed preparing and performing this piece and I believe others will too. Suzuki's writing is well suited for chamber music and I would love to see this piece expanded for a saxophone quartet where each part could be featured during different solo sections.

<sup>22</sup> The saxophone and top piano staff is treble clef and the bottom staff is bass clef.

## CHAPTER 8

### *IMPROMPTU*

#### **Composer Biography**

Aida De Moya is a guitarist, composer, arranger, and orchestrator. Her compositions blend elements of jazz, Brazilian music, and folkloric components of her native Dominican Republic. She graduated from Berklee with a B.M. in Jazz Composition and Performance and also holds a Master's of Music in Jazz Studies—Composition from the New England Conservatory of Music. She was selected as a winner of the JEN Young Composers Showcase Award and received many awards from Berklee's Jazz Composition and Guitar departments. Her music has been performed by renowned artists such as Paquito D'Rivera, Berta Rojaz, Maria Creuza, and Toninho Horta. De Moya's full biography can be found at <https://www.aidademoya.com/about>.

I met De Moya through her teacher, Ayn Inerto. Her composition interests include Latin music and I was excited with her vision for this piece. She also took a special interest in writing for the baritone saxophone which helps provide more repertoire to this sometimes-neglected instrument *Impromptu* adds an exciting stylistic contrast to the collection and the improvisation section includes colorful harmonies and beautiful rhythmic writing.



## Program Notes

The inspiration behind this piece runs through some parts of South America. Specifically influences from Brazilian and Argentinian music. As a woman in an environment highly dominated by men, dedicating your life to jazz and popular music can be very overwhelming. Not only do you have to develop your craft as a musician like everyone else but as soon as you walk into a room you must be ready to deal with gender misconceptions and in many cases the fact that some will just expect you to fail or not be as good as a male musician.

It sounds crazy, but unfortunately it is still true today.

Impromptu is by its definition a piece of music prompted by the spirit of the moment, by improvisation and lack of judging too much. I wanted to write what I heard playing in my head and not try to impress the listener but in this case invite them in and let them go on their own journey, wherever it may take them.

This piece features the baritone saxophone which is often used as a bass-line instrument, to showcase its beautiful mellowness, its ability to clearly play melodies and excel as a solo instrument as well. It is an instrument that offers flexibility, expression, and of course big and fat bottom which we all love!<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Aida De Moya, email to author, November 21, 2021

## Performance Guide

*Impromptu* by Aida De Moya is a six-minute piece for baritone saxophone and piano. This work is influenced by South American rhythms and includes elements of Brazilian choro and tango music. Prominent jazz musician Anat Cohen explains choro as the “father of samba and the grandfather of bossa nova.”<sup>24</sup> Originating in Rio de Janeiro, choro is considered the foundation of Brazilian music. Tango has origins in Argentina and Uruguay and is influenced by regional folk music and dance.<sup>25</sup> By combining these styles with elements of contemporary Latin jazz, De Moya’s piece has a unique and distinct Latin style.

The form of *Impromptu* is similar to a five-part rondo. The melodic material matches the ABACA format; however, De Moya bookends the rondo form with an introduction and a coda. Although she favors minor sonorities and most of the piece is in d minor, the final A section and coda ends in f minor. There is one lengthy solo section that includes more advanced chord changes and a sample solo is provided for improvisational guidance. To get an overall understanding of *Impromptu*, it is suggested to reference the phrase map below.

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<sup>24</sup> Jazz at Lincoln Center’s JAZZ ACADAMY, “Hearing Brazil’s Choro, Part One,” directed by Eric Suquet, produced by Seton Hawkins, May 22, 2018, video, <https://youtube.com/watch?v=Zes9yQaSwQk>.

<sup>25</sup> Masterclass, “Guide to Tango Music: A Brief History of Argentine Tango,” June 7, 2021, <https://masterclass.com/articles/guidetotango-music>.

**Table 18:** *Impromptu* Phrase Map

<i>Impromptu</i> Phrase Map		
Form	Measure	Description
Intro	m. 1-9	Piano introduction-cantabile
	m. 9-17	Piano bass ostinato in faster tempo-d minor
A	m. 17-33	Saxophone plays initial A melody
B	m. 22-49	B melody in V7/iii
A	m. 49-65	A melody back to d minor
C	m. 65-93	Moderato-mood shift in D Major
Solo Section	m. 93-125	Saxophone solo section-d minor
A	m. 125-141	A melody in f minor
Coda	m. 141-end	Coda in f minor

When learning this piece, there are some performance aspects to acknowledge regarding articulation, phrasing, and breathing. Considering the Latin elements of this piece, the eighth notes should be played straight and the music should feel light. The initial A theme can slow down if the articulation is too heavy. To keep the quick tempo consistent, both performers should drive their eighth notes forward with a smooth and connected articulation. Most notes should be played full length, although using a staccato articulation on syncopated passages can highlight the Latin rhythms. This stylistic use of articulation should also continue in the solo section. Furthermore, De Moya uses accents to emphasize chord changes throughout this piece. In m. 45-47, she places an accent on the last eighth note in each measure to bring out the half step motion in the bass line. The saxophonist can lean on these notes by playing them full value and starting them with a tongued push of air.

**Example 25:** *Impromptu*, score, articulation clarification, m. 45-47. Used with permission from the copyright holder.

The image shows a musical score for three staves. The top staff is in treble clef and contains a melodic line starting at measure 45, marked with a '45' above the staff. The middle staff is also in treble clef and contains a harmonic accompaniment with chords and rests. The bottom staff is in bass clef and contains a bass line with eighth notes and slurs. The score is for measures 45-47.

When performing *Impromptu*, the saxophonist can take rhythmic liberties with regard to the melody. This piece was inspired by music that tends to be very free and is not rigid in terms of rhythm. Performers can personalize the tune by taking their own artistic liberties that include stretching rhythmic figures, adding syncopation, and playing with rubato. Some liberties I took as a performer include adding glissandos, ritardandos, and exploring higher registers of the melody. This flexible phrasing perspective is uncommon in classical repertoire; however, it is common and expected in jazz.

The last performance aspect to consider is breathing. Because the baritone saxophone is one of the largest saxophones, it requires a lot of air. There are many phrases in this piece that are difficult to execute due to their length, especially during the first A section. Performers should aim for four measure phrasing and utilize eighth note rests as places to sneak breaths when needed. Pacing dynamics is also a great way to save air. De Moya uses softer dynamics throughout the work suggesting that the music should not be too heavy. By playing softer, the saxophonist can contribute to the light music while still being able to complete their phrases.

The most difficult section to perform breathing-wise is the last phrase starting at m. 149. It is instinctive for the performer to use rubato during this phrase, but it is challenging to do this in one breath. The piece ends on a low D with a fermata, which needs a lot of air support to play. Adding rubato, a ritardando, and holding the last note an appropriate length is almost impossible in one breath. Some solutions include starting the phrase soft to conserve air, adding a quick breath after beat three in the second to last measure, and holding the fermata a little shorter.

**Example 26:** *Impromptu*, saxophone part, breathing clarification, m. 149-153. Used with permission from the copyright holder.



## Improvisation Guide

There is one solo section in *Impromptu* that takes place from m. 93-125. Before studying the improvisation section, it is a good idea for both performers to listen to Brazilian choro and tango music. This music favors a continuous rhythmic development and using eighth and sixteenth notes in the solo will help create this feel. Using busier rhythms at a slower tempo can also help the propel the music forward. The form of the chord progression is eight measures long and it modulates from B minor to D minor halfway through. This progression is played a total of four times, twice in B minor and twice in D minor. To better understand the form, I've compared the chord progression with simple roman numeral analysis.

**Table 19:** *Impromptu*, chord progression.

8-Bar Form				
b min:	Bmin9	/A#	Bmin9	/A#
	Emin9	F dim	////	F#7(b9)
d min:	Dmin9	/C#	Dmin9	/C#
	Gmin9	G# dim	////	F#7(b9)

8-Bar Form				
b min:	I	I	I	I
	IV	IV	IV	V
d min:	I	I	I	I
	IV	IV	IV	V/d min

De Moya uses a series of minor nine, dominant, and diminished chords as the harmonic basis of her solo section. When she labels a “/X” chord, it indicates that the prior chord is repeated with the “X” note in the bass. For example, the b minor 9 chord goes to an /A#. The “/A#” is indicating that the major 7<sup>th</sup> of b minor 9 is now the bass note of the chord. When starting to study a new chord progression, it is helpful to spell out

the chords. This helps the performer understand how to outline each chord and provides a starting point for pitch. After spelling out the chords, the performer can find half step motion between chords to help outline the progression in their solo. De Moya also provides a sample solo in this piece. Referencing her sample solo as well as the outlined chords can help new improvisors understand de Moya’s note choices.

**Table 20:** *Impromptu*, chord spelling.

The image displays four staves of musical notation, each representing a different chord progression. The first staff shows Bmin9 and /A#2. The second staff shows Emin9, Fdim, and F#7(b9). The third staff shows Dmin9 and /C#2. The fourth staff shows Gmin9, G#dim, and F#7(b9). Each chord is represented by a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a specific chord symbol above the staff. The notes are written as whole notes or half notes, with some staves including a slash and a repeat sign to indicate a solo section.

There are a few ways the performer can approach this solo section. First, they can play De Moya’s written solo. Using her written solo is a great starting point to understanding the chord changes. Second, they can write out a solo using the changes as a guide. This option takes away the anxiety of improvising in the moment. Third, the saxophonist can play half of the solo and the pianist can take over the solo when it modulates. In this case, De Moya suggests that the saxophonist plays the left hand of the piano part. Lastly, the saxophonist can learn the changes with the chords provided and improvise their way through, focusing on using chord tones and highlighting half steps between chord changes.

*Impromptu's* Latin inspired rhythms and melodies add excitement and style to this piece. Although the lengthy solo section includes more advanced harmonic writing, the sample solo provided is a great pedagogical tool for new improvisors. Apart from other pieces in the collection, the solo section occurs at a slower tempo, which can give performers the chance to explore melody and rhythm in a different setting. Although De Moya was given a time restriction, I could see this piece expanded to a multi-movement work exploring the ranges and possibilities of the baritone saxophone in the context of Latin music.



## CHAPTER 9:

### CONCLUSION

My initial goal for this project was to provide repertoire to female classical saxophonists that would help them learn the language of improvisation, gain confidence creating musical material, and feel more comfortable participating in a male dominated art form. However, the works produced can obviously be employed by any classically trained musicians endeavoring to feel more comfortable with fundamental improvisation. By breaking down these elements of improvisation into small, manageable sections and providing ample amount of educational material, performers have the opportunity to learn at their own pace depending on their comfort level. Through performing and recording these works, I have gained immense confidence in my own understanding of the jazz language and of myself as an improviser. I am excited about the future implications of these works, and I hope to promote this project through the distribution of my recordings, live performances, and presentations. Expanding these pieces or concepts into concertos, chamber music, and large ensemble music is also an intriguing possibility.

With the development of new organizations, programs, and workshops, young women are now being afforded many more opportunities to be a part of the jazz world. With the help of mentorships, female friendly communities, and the development of new repertoire, we are being given better tools and opportunities to learn and thrive as jazz musicians.

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APPENDIX A

TRACK LIST

TRACK

1. ***Des-dues (2021)***  
Sam Spear
2. Piano Track m. 61-80
  
3. ***Sunlit Dream (2021)***  
Annie Booth
4. I. Falling
5. II. Rooting
6. II. Piano Track m.50-74
7. III. Rising
8. III. Piano Track m. 46-65
9. IV. Blooming
  
10. ***Impromptu (2021)***  
Aida De Moya
11. Piano Track m. 93-124
  
12. ***From A to Z: Two Women's Journeys (2021)***  
Ayn Insetto
13. Piano Track m. 137-161
  
14. ***Jogo (2021)***  
Yoko Suzuki
15. Piano Track m. 83-120
  
16. ***Taking Flight (2021)***  
Katelyn Vincent
17. Piano Track m. 114-166