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A comparative study of selected saxophone quartet repertoire from the Mule, Rascher and Apollo Saxophone Quartets between 1928 and 1995

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A comparative study of selected saxophone quartet repertoire from the Mule, Rascher and Apollo Saxophone Quartets between 1928 and 1995

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This dissertation is submitted for the degree of Bachelor of Music Honours

2011

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Abstract

This research will investigate the nature of saxophone quartet repertoire that has resulted from the careers of the Mule, Rascher and Apollo saxophone quartets, who have played important roles in creating a base of concert repertoire for the ensemble. This research aims to identify trends in the styles of repertoire produced, along with the techniques that are required of the performers.

This research will discuss nine works that have been commissioned by, or dedicated to, three professional saxophone quartets; *the Marcel Mule Quartet*, *the Rascher Saxophone Quartet*, and *The Apollo Saxophone Quartet*. The quartets have been chosen as they have all played an important role in creating new repertoire for the saxophone quartet. With the Marcel Mule Quartet existing from 1928-1967, the Rascher quartet existing from 1969 to the present day and the Apollo Saxophone Quartet existing from 1985 to the present day, their careers will provide an insight into the development of the saxophone quartet since 1928.

The saxophone quartet (SATB)¹ as a concert ensemble is widely agreed to have been standardised in 1928 with the creation of le Quatour de la Musique de la Garde Republicaine² by soloist Marcel Mule.³ Although there were saxophone ensembles performing before this, Marcel Mule was the first to establish the saxophone quartet as a serious concert ensemble and to attract serious composers to write for the ensemble.⁴ The Rascher Saxophone Quartet was founded in 1969 by virtuoso Siguard Rascher and is still active today. Rascher, like Mule, inspired many influential composers to write for this format including Philip Glass, Luciano Berio, Franco Donatoni and Iannis Xenakis.⁵ The Apollo Saxophone Quartet was formed in 1985 and comprised of 4 students at the Royal

¹ Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Baritone

² From this point on I will refer to le Quatour de la Musique de la Garde Republicaine as 'the Marcel Mule Quartet' which the quartet later changed its name to.

³ Susan Fancher, "The Saxophone Quartet: A History of the Saxophone Quartet," *Saxophone Journal* 30, no. 3 (2006).Pg. 17

⁴ Scott Plugge, "The History of the Saxophone Ensemble: A Study of the Development of the Saxophone Quartet into a Concert Genre" (NorthWestern University 2003).Pg.191-192

⁵ Fancher, "The Saxophone Quartet: A History of the Saxophone Quartet."Pg.17

Northern College of Manchester. Still performing today, the Apollo Saxophone Quartet has commissioned over 100 works, many of which tenor player Andy Scott notes are considered “standard repertoire”.⁶

⁶ John Robert Brown, "Andy Scott," *Clarinet and Saxophone Society of Great Britain* 32, no. 2 (2006).Pg.18

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Declaration

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I would also like to thank my family for their support and encouragement especially in the last six months.

Chapter 1

Introduction

Early Saxophone ensemble history

Since the first published work for the saxophone quartet (1844), the ensemble has become an established chamber ensemble with an increasing repertoire to support it. Rhett Bender has shown that in America alone the number of compositions by American composers has, "...steadily increased: 11 from the 1960's, 21 from the 1970's, 28 from the 1980's and 24 from the 1990's".⁷

Before the SATB instrumentation was standardised through the work of the Mule quartet, there were several important developments that helped the formation of early saxophone ensembles. Firstly, while the saxophone was utilized in various sized ensembles soon after the creation of the instrument, it was George Kastner's *Grand Sextour* (1844) that heralded the first published work for saxophone ensemble and marked the beginning of the ensembles development. This development then continued with the creation of a pool of repertoire written between 1857-1870, while Adolphe Sax - the creator of the instrument - was serving at the Conservatoire National de Musique as saxophone instructor.

Further, in 1845, the French military band instrumentation was restructured to include a section of saxophones. This was another major step in not only assisting the formation of saxophone ensembles, but also in providing a platform for solo saxophone performances. Finally saxophone ensembles gained widespread popularity during the 1920's through the work of vaudeville ensembles such as the Six Brown Brother's.⁸

The most important advancement contributing to the saxophone quartet's development as a serious concert ensemble, however, was achieved through the formation of *the Marcel Mule Quartet*. From the outset, the Mule quartet performed as an SATB quartet and

⁷ Rhett Bender, *An Annotated Bibliography of Saxophone Quartets by American Composers* (Colne Lambert Academic Publishing, 2010).Pg.120

⁸ Plugge, "The History of the Saxophone Ensemble: A Study of the Development of the Saxophone Quartet into a Concert Genre".Pg.3-4

cultivated a repertoire for this instrumentation.⁹ The predominantly Western classical repertoire that was created by the Mule quartet provided a base for the future of the ensemble. However, as it is an ensemble that has developed predominantly in the 20th century, there have been many styles of music that have also entered the quartet repertory, some of which will be discussed briefly during the course of this paper.

In his research, *The History of the Saxophone Ensemble: A Study of the Development of the Saxophone Quartet into a Concert Genre*, Scott Plugge investigates the assumption, "...that the saxophone ensemble constitutes a critical and integral part of the history of saxophone performance practice".¹⁰ The performance standards in saxophone quartet playing today are, however, varied in many aspects. One reason for this according to Tim Ruedeman is the lack of a historical lineage of repertoire comparable to that of the string quartet.¹¹ The string quartet has an extensive repertoire extending from the classical era while early compositions for the SATB saxophone quartet do not form a lineage of the same length. Ruedeman notes that the lack of an established standard repertoire along with the saxophone's jazz heritage and role in popular music has created inconsistent standards of performance practice in modern saxophone quartets.¹² The importance of the role of identifying a foundational pool of quartet music, and establishing and encouraging an ongoing performance repertoire would seem a key issue in securing the future of the ensemble, which is the main impetus for this research.

Between 1870 and 1928 only eight compositions in a non-popular style were created for Saxophone ensembles.¹³ In his discussion of the Saxophone Quartet since 1928 Dr Eugene Rousseau noted that, "...so swift has been the development of this medium and so abundant is its present repertory that it hardly seems possible it is only a half-century old".¹⁴ Richard Ingham in his discussion of the saxophone quartet, agrees with Rousseau commenting that, "...historically the saxophone quartet as a medium is a relatively new concept, so it is rare for works to become established- more prevalent is the hothouse

⁹ Ibid.Pg. 179

¹⁰ Ibid.Pg.iii

¹¹ Timothy J Ruedeman, "Lyric-Form Archetype and the Early Works for Saxophone Quartet, 1844--1928: An Analytical and Historical Context for Saxophone Performance." (New York University, 2009).Pg.2

¹² Ibid., 120.

¹³ Plugge, "The History of the Saxophone Ensemble: A Study of the Development of the Saxophone Quartet into a Concert Genre".Pg.8

¹⁴ Eugene Rousseau, *Marcel Mule: His Life and the Saxophone* (Wisconsin: Étoile 1982).Pg.17

atmosphere of a high proportion of new works being incorporated into programmes on a trial basis".¹⁵ The saxophone quartet has moved quickly between a period of little activity into a period of much faster repertoire creation.

Both Plugge and Ruedeman have concluded that the early development of the saxophone quartet is important in not only saxophone quartet performance practice history, but also in solo performance. The work of Plugge discussed the early development of the saxophone quartet and its repertoire and shown the importance of the repertoire that resulted. This research hopes to identify key trends in repertoire selection and provide a source of information for performers.

Methodology

The impact of the work of each of the previously mentioned quartets will be briefly discussed, drawing information from their discographies of saxophone quartet music. This will demonstrate the importance of each group in securing new works for the saxophone quartet. A brief analysis will then be provided for the works selected from the pool of repertoire performed by each quartet. Specific works will be chosen from repertoire that would seem to exemplify the respective quartet's contribution to saxophone quartet repertoire.

Annotations for these selected works will be provided using a format based on the arrangement provided by Rhett Bender in his, *An Annotated Bibliography of Saxophone Quartets by American Composers* (2010). Bender provides the following information for each work.

- Composer's name and dates.
- Title
- Movement titles and/or tempo indications.
- Publisher, location, date of publication and/or date of composition.

¹⁵ Richard Ingham, "The Cambridge Companion to the Saxophone," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Saxophone*, ed. Richard Ingham (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).Pg.71

- Grade of difficulty
- Duration of composition.
- Available recordings
- Musical style
- Performance considerations.¹⁶

The performance considerations will include aspects such as range, extended techniques requirements for improvisation and the roles of the instruments. As well as covering these criteria any important circumstances surrounding the works commissioning or dedication will be discussed.

¹⁶ Bender, *An Annotated Bibliography of Saxophone Quartets by American Composers*.Pg.6

Chapter 2

The Mule Saxophone Quartet (1928-1967)

The Marcel Mule quartet performed and recorded from 1928-1967 led by Marcel Mule who through his relationships with prominent composers was able to help create an extensive library of performance repertoire for the quartet.¹⁷ The first performance of the ensemble took place on December 2nd, 1928 using transcriptions made by its members. Such transcriptions included works by Mozart, Debussy and Rimsky-Korsakov. In 1930 they received their first original composition *Au jardin des bêtes sauvages* by Pierre Vellones. The Quartet made another breakthrough being awarded le Grand Prix du disque for their 1937 recording of another of Vellones 'purpose written' works, *Introduction et Variations sur une Ronde Populaire* (1936).¹⁸

Repertoire Analysis

Isaac Albeniz: *Sevilla*

Isaac Albeniz: (1860-1909)

Title: *Sevilla*

Composed: 1886

Transcribed by Marcel Mule (1901-2001)

Published by: Gerard Billaudot

Location: Paris

¹⁷ Ingham, "The Cambridge Companion to the Saxophone."Pg.65-66

¹⁸ Plugge, "The History of the Saxophone Ensemble: A Study of the Development of the Saxophone Quartet into a Concert Genre".Pg.180-181

Spanish composer and pianist Isaac Albeniz combined influences of European salon and Spanish folk music while also making use of impressionistic harmonies. *Sévilla* is a movement from Isaac Albeniz's first of two *Suite Española's* (1886-9).¹⁹

Sevilla was one of many works transcribed by Marcel Mule that formed the early repertoire of the Mule quartet. The instruments all play within their written ranges in a texture that is predominantly homophonic. The melody is scored almost exclusively in the soprano part including unaccompanied solos, while the alto and tenor parts both fulfil an accompanying role with small counter melody lines. The baritone is predominantly playing a bass line figuration with the exception of a recurring solo rhythmic motif that brings each section to an end. All parts remain within the written range of the instruments (a baritone with a low A is required). No special techniques are used in the writing.

Comparing just the first four measures of the piano version (Figure1) and the quartet version (Figure2), shows that some sacrifices had to be made to create a version for saxophone quartet. In the piano version for instance, the bass is doubled the octave up while in the quartet only the baritone plays the bass. Further, in the second measure the baritone covers the rhythmic part of the bass line, rather than sustaining a minum as in the piano part.



Figure 1: Isaac Albeniz, *Sevilla*, Piano version, M.1-4

¹⁹ Wendy Thompson and Christopher Webber, "Albeniz, Isaac (Manuel Francisco)," *The Oxford Companion to Music*.

Allegro moderato

S. Sax
A. Sax
T. Sax
B. Sax

Figure 2: . Isaac Albeniz, (Transcription by Marcel Mule), *Sevilla*, saxophone quartet version, M.1-4

There are several other important changes throughout the work, including the placement of several soprano parts down the octave due to range limitations of the saxophone. There are also several parts that are written as unaccompanied solo lines in the quartet version, which in the piano version are double down the octave.

Alexander Glazunov: *Saxophone Quartet Op 109*

Alexander Glazunov: (1865-1936)

Title: *Saxophone Quartet, Op. 109*

1. Partie
2. Canzona Variee
3. Variation 1
4. Variation 2
5. Variation 3 (A la Schumann)
6. Variation 4 (A la Chopin)
7. Variation 5 (Scherzo)
8. Finale

Composed: 1932

Publisher: M.P. Belaiff Mainz

Location: Paris

The Glazunov saxophone quartet is widely regarded as the most significant work composed for the Mule Quartet.²⁰ The work was dedicated to the Mule Quartet by Glazunov who had heard them playing in the *Garde Republicaine*. In a letter dated 21 March 1932 (21st March) Glazunov wrote,

I have an idea to write a quartet for saxophones. These instruments are distinctively audible; in the orchestra they even cover regular woodwinds by their sound. There are great saxophone soloists in the band of the National Guard. Movement I is coming to an end, I have an idea for II-Canzona.²¹

In another letter dated 2nd June 1932, Glazunov, while explaining some of his compositional ideas to the professor of composition at the St Petersburg Conservatory, noted that, "...I am afraid that this composition will fatigue performers due to its length. I talked to one of them and he assured me".²²

These letters show that Glazunov was in contact with the Mule quartet, able to hear them perform and to question them on any difficulties in performing the work. The work was premiered in a private concert in 1932, in Gaveau Hall.²³

The Glazunov Quartet consists of 3 movements, the second movement a theme with 5 variations. All parts remain within the written range of the instruments.

In his description of the work, Peter Eliot Stone notes that the first movement is in sonata form with, "...harmonies reminiscent of Liszt and Wagner...".²⁴ Stone goes on to suggest that the theme and first variation of the canzona are, "...Tchaikovskian..." in nature²⁵. While the third and fourth variations are purposefully attributed to Schumann and Chopin respectively by Glazunov, Stone comments on the third movement saying that it, "...betrays

²⁰ Eric Nestler, "A Performance Analysis of the Saxophone Quartet Op. 109 by Alexander Glazounov, the Saxophone Quartet Nr. 2 *Variations and Cadenzas*, by William Karlins, and the Saxophone Quartet, Op. 102 by Florent Schmitt" (Indiana University, 1994).Pg.6

²¹ Andre Sobchenko, "Letters from Glazunov, "the Saxophone Years", " *The Saxophone Journal* 22 no. 1 (1997).Pg 67

²² Ibid.

²³ Nestler, "A Performance Analysis of the Saxophone Quartet Op. 109 by Alexander Glazounov, the Saxophone Quartet Nr. 2 *Variations and Cadenzas*, by William Karlins, and the Saxophone Quartet, Op. 102 by Florent Schmitt".Pg.14

²⁴ Ibid.Pg.14

²⁵ Ibid.

Glazunov's Parisian residency. Here it is as if Russian lyricism were infused with French spirits".²⁶

Throughout the work there is often a sharing of melodic material throughout the parts. Dr Eric Nestler comments that the sharing of the closing theme group through the parts, from highest to lowest at m. 193 is, "...typical of Glazunov's writing".²⁷ This sharing of thematic material can be seen in Figure 3. Nestler mentions that through the variations of the second movement each saxophone is featured in a solo role. The final movement is a rondo form which features the soprano at the outset. Nestler highlights that later in the movement thematic material is again shared through the parts.²⁸

15
poco piu tranquillo

Soprano Saxophone
Alto Saxophone
Tenor Saxophone
Baritone Saxophone

Figure 3: Alexander Glazunov, Saxophone Quartet Opus 109, Movement 1 Partie, M.193-196.

Eugene Bozza: *Nuages*

Eugene Bozza (1905-1991)

Title: *Nuages*

Composed: 1946

Publisher: Alphonse Leduc

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.Pg.19

²⁸ Ibid.Pg.28

Location: Paris

French composer, conductor and violinist Eugene Bozza has been most remembered for his wind chamber music which displays many of the characteristics of 20th century French chamber music including melodic fluency, elegance of structure and an awareness of instrumental capabilities.²⁹

As well as his composition *Nuages*, for saxophone quartet, Bozza has contributed several other important works to the classical saxophone repertory including his *Aria* (1936), *Concertino*, (1938), *Etudes caprices*, (1944), *Improvisation et caprice*, (1944), and his other saxophone quartet, *Andante et Scherzo* (1938).³⁰

Nuages is a one-movement 'character' piece written for the Marcel Mule quartet which features fast winding chromatic melodies and parallel harmonies. In the first 7 measures, the saxophones pass a winding chromatic phrase to one another until the first theme begins at measure 8. This theme consists predominantly of the soprano playing a chromatic melody while the alto, tenor and baritone saxophones provide rhythmic and harmonic support, often in close parallel chords. This opening section ends at rehearsal mark '3' where the separate parts abandon their respective roles to again share a chromatic scale. This leads into a development section where the chromatic melody is explored in various pairings.

During the development of the theme, the instruments all play equally important roles. For example at measure thirty-five there are several fugal entries beginning with the baritone and followed by the tenor, alto and soprano. There is also an ensemble section from measures 43 to 48 where the separate parts all play triplets in parallel harmony. Finally Bozza revisits the texture used earlier in the work where a single chromatic theme passes between the instruments with no accompaniment. The interaction of the saxophones during the development of the theme can be seen in Figure 4.

²⁹ Griffiths Paul, "Bozza, Eugène," *Grove Music Online*.

³⁰ Harry R. Gee, *Saxophone Soloists and Their Music 1844-1985: An Annotated Bibliography* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986).Pg.224-225

The image displays two systems of musical notation for Eugene Bozza's *Nuages*, measures 65-68. The first system (measures 65-66) features four saxophone parts: Soprano, Alto, Tenor, and Baritone. The Soprano part is in the lead, playing a melodic line with slurs and accents. The other three parts provide harmonic support with rhythmic patterns. The second system (measures 67-68) continues the piece, with the Soprano part playing a more complex melodic line. The Alto and Tenor parts have *mf* (mezzo-forte) markings. The Baritone part also has an *mf* marking. The music is in 2/4 time and features a variety of rhythmic values and articulations.

Figure 4: Eugene Bozza, *Nuages*, M.65-68.

Generally in this work the instruments all play equally important roles, although the soprano still maintains the lead part for the largest portion of the work.

These three quartets are important works in the Mule Quartets repertoire. Transcriptions such as *Sevilla*, played an important role in the quartets early success. The Glazunov quartet as mentioned before is considered an extremely significant work due to the importance of Glazunov as a composer and also due to the length of the composition. Both *Nuages* and Glazunov's *Saxophone Quartet Op 109*, exemplify the style of Western classical music that was produced for the quartet.

Chapter 3

The Rascher Saxophone Quartet (1969-)

Since their formation in 1969, the Rascher Saxophone Quartet has also played an influential role in creating a solid base of repertoire for the saxophone quartet. While discussing one of the very first tours the quartet embarked upon, soprano saxophonist (and daughter of the quartet's founder, Sigurd Rascher) of the quartet, Carina Rascher made the observation that, 'we were just beginning and trying out our repertoire which consisted mainly of transcriptions'.³¹ Both the Rascher and the Mule quartet began their careers using transcriptions due to the lack of concert music available for SATB saxophone quartet.

The Rascher Quartet have not only continued the legacy of the Mule quartet by continuing to create a repertoire for saxophone quartet, but have also heavily influenced the nature of saxophone quartet music that has arisen in the post- Mule quartet era. Just as the Mule quartet pioneered the use of vibrato in classical quartet playing, the Rascher quartet led the way in extending the written range utilized by composers. Carina observes that, "...composers always ask for it (altissimo³²) because they know we can do it".³³ Carina also observes that the quartet, "...works with the composer before he or she writes the piece, during, and after".³⁴ This intense involvement in the creation of works has affected the techniques and difficulty of the repertoire they have produced.

Iannis Xenakis: XAS

Iannis Xenakis: (1921-2001)

Title: XAS

³¹ James Noyes, "Rascher Saxophone Quartet," *Saxophone Journal* Vol 23, No. 6, no. July/August (1999).Pg. 34

³² Altissimo: This term refers to the pitches above the normal range of the saxophone. This register has become a necessary tool for classical saxophonist through the course of the 20th century due to the influence of virtuoso's such as Sigurd Rascher. Jean-Denis Michat Claude Delangle, "The Contemporary Saxophone," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Saxophone*, ed. Richard Ingham (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).Pg.177

³³ Noyes, "Rascher Saxophone Quartet."Pg. 37

³⁴ Ibid.Pg. 36

Year Composed: 1987

Publisher: Salabert

Location: Paris

Iannis Xenakis pioneered many new ways in which sound was used in composition in the 20th Century. His background in architecture and mathematics led him to experiment with the control of the spatial dimensions of music as well as *stochastic* music.³⁵ Carina Rascher explained that the quartet travelled to Paris to meet Xenakis and describes how he listened to the quartet play and also asked them to demonstrate various techniques, asking them to experiment using less vibrato and with fast altissimo passages.³⁶

John-Edward Kelly who joined the Rascher quartet after Rascher's retirement described XAS as,

one of the most powerful and original contributions to the saxophone quartet repertoire to date. It is unparalleled in its dynamic effect, tremendous energy, and powerful sonorities, yet its structure is uncomplicated, even classical.³⁷

The work contains many extended techniques, such as specifically notated and multiphonics³⁸ and micro-intervals³⁹ included in all four parts. The influence of the Rascher Quartet is evident, as can be seen in Figure 5, where the multiphonics notated in measure three are marked, "Multiphonics by Rascher Saxophone Quartet".⁴⁰ The work explores the tone colours of the saxophone quartet especially at extreme dynamics and in extreme registers while the saxophones all fulfil an ensemble role, with few solo or accompaniment roles. For the majority of the work all parts play in rhythmic unison and the instruments play a subservient role to creating various tone colours through the extremities of their ranges.

³⁵ Hoffmann Peter, "Xenakis, Iannis," *Grove Music Online*.

³⁶ Noyes, "Rascher Saxophone Quartet." Pg. 38

³⁷ Iannis Xenakis, *Xas* (Paris: Editions SALABERT, 1987); *ibid*.

³⁸ "Using certain fingerings, several sounds can be produced simultaneously. Some of these are consonant sounds, although the majority are dissonant with the intervals of a seventh and ninth causing the clashes" Claude Delangle, "The Contemporary Saxophone." Pg. 180

³⁹ Using various alternate fingerings, "...all the quarter-tones from c# 1 are playable..." *ibid*. Pg.177

XAS
quatuor de saxophones

Iannis XENAKIS

partie de saxophone alto en mi b

Figure 5: Iannis Xenakis, XAS alto saxophone part M.1-4.

Each instrument has a part that utilises the altissimo register. The soprano is required to play from low Bb to altissimo D, which covers a three octave range as opposed to the written range of two and a half octaves. The alto is required to play from low Bb to super altissimo G natural, the tenor from low Bb to super altissimo G and the baritone from low Bb to super altissimo A. As well as utilising multiphonics and altissimo, each instrument is required to play an overtone⁴¹ over Bb.

Charles Wuorinen: *Saxophone Quartet*

Charles Wuorinen: (1938-)

Title: *Saxophone Quartet*

Composed: 1992

Publisher: C.F. Peters.

Location: New York

Duration 16:00

⁴¹ "By changing the shape of the oral cavity, altering the lower-jaw pressure and forming a variety of vowel shapes, different colours and harmonics can be produced" Claude Delangle, "The Contemporary Saxophone."Pg. 176

Charles Wuorinen's compositional accomplishments have earned him a Pulitzer prize in music as well as a *MacArthur fellowship*. As well as composing, Wuorinen is an accomplished pianist and conductor and has appeared with the Cleveland Orchestra, Chicago Symphony, New York Symphony, San Francisco Symphony, Los Angeles Philharmonic and the American Composers Orchestra. Furthermore Wuorinen has lectured at Universities throughout America and served on the faculties of Columbia, Princeton and Yale Universities.⁴² In his career he has developed a compositional style marked with, "...dazzling virtuosity, innovative formal design and an outward exuberance that belies a controlled internal rigour".⁴³ Fractal geometry, Gregorian chants and Indian raga have all influenced Wuorinen's composition style.⁴⁴

In his programme notes for the saxophone quartet Wuorinen wrote,

I composed my *Saxophone Quartet for the superb Rascher Quartet* in response to a commission from the city of Mönchengladbach and the Ludwig Forum in Achen. The work is a single movement of about quarter-hours duration, proceeding through a series of undulating variation-sections, gradually gaining momentum all the time.⁴⁵

The harmonies and melodies used by Wuorinen are non functional in a traditional sense.⁴⁶ As with the Xenakis saxophone quartet, all parts contain extreme technical difficulties and all players are required to play altissimo passages. Wuorinen often blurs the pulse and creates a *pointillist*-like texture using complex combinations of cross rhythms and staggered entries. Another feature of Wuorinen's writing style in this work is his precise notation of articulation. Figure 6 demonstrates Wuorinen's use of complex rhythms, precise articulation and also his notation of flutter tongue⁴⁷ in the baritone part.

⁴² "Charles Wuorinen: Biography," <http://www.charleswuorinen.com/>.

⁴³ Carucci Jason and Karchin Louis, "Wuorinen, Charles," *Grove Music Online*.

⁴⁴ "Wuorinen, Charles (6/09/1938-)," in *Naxos Music Library*.

⁴⁵ Bender, *An Annotated Bibliography of Saxophone Quartets by American Composers*.Pg. 116

⁴⁶ *Ibid*.Pg. 117

⁴⁷ "A classic contemporary technique, flutter-tonguing is obtained by rolling the tongue against the palate" Claude Delangle, "The Contemporary Saxophone."Pg.92

The image displays a musical score for a saxophone quartet, specifically measures 133 and 134. The score is written for four saxophones: Soprano, Alto, Tenor, and Baritone. The key signature is one sharp (F#). Measure 133 features a triplet in the Soprano and Tenor parts, and a 5:6 time signature in the Alto and Baritone parts. Measure 134 is divided into two systems. The first system has time signatures of 4:3, 7:6, and 4:3. The second system has time signatures of 5:6 and 4:3. Dynamic markings include *ff* and *fff*. The score includes various rhythmic notations such as triplets, slurs, and accents.

Figure 6: Charles Wuorinen, Saxophone Quartet M.133-135

Philip Glass: *Saxophone Quartet*

Philip Glass: (1937-)

Title: *Concerto for Saxophone Quartet and Orchestra*

Composed: 1995

Publisher: Dunvagen Music Publishers

Duration: 23'

Along with Terry Riley and Steve Reich, American composer Philip Glass was a key figure in the establishment of Minimalism during the 1960's. During the late 60's and early 70's, Glass began to develop compositions for his own ensemble, the 'Philip Glass Ensemble', which included keyboards, vocals and saxophones.⁴⁸ Glass describes his attraction to the saxophone saying that,

You have to remember that at that time – 1959, 1960, 1961, the saxophone was really coming into its own, through the very considerable talents of people like Sonny Stitt and John Coltrane, and before that, of course, Charlie Parker. There were so many great players. I heard John Coltrane play in the 1950's very often.⁴⁹

Glass wrote the concerto after a request from the Rascher quartet. He described his approach to the works saying,

I wrote it two ways. Bruce Wienberger, the tenor player from Rascher Saxophone Quartet, asked me to write a saxophone concerto and said that they wanted a piece that could be both a concerto with orchestra and a version for quartet..... One (movement) features soprano, one is baritone... Each movement of the concerto version would feature the soloist and the orchestra would pick up the other parts. So that in the orchestra version you get a saxophone quartet with the orchestra, but each movement features one of the members of the quartet. There are places, like in the last movement, when all four are playing together. In a way, the recital version is an extremely difficult piece to play, because not only does each movement feature one of the saxophones, but the other three have to play all the other orchestra parts.⁵⁰

The first performance by the Rascher quartet of the saxophone quartet version took place on the 27th of July 1995 at the Schlewswig Holstein Festival in Hasselburg, Germany. The Orchestral version was also premiered by the Rascher quartet with the Stockholm Radio Orchestra on 1st September 1995.⁵¹

In his analysis Nick Breckenfield comments on several important aspects in this piece. The first movement progresses with underlying flowing quavers, where the soprano and the alto take up a semiquaver figuration "...ebbing and flowing in true Glassien style...". The second

⁴⁸ Strickland Edward, "Glass, Philip," *Grove Music Online*.

⁴⁹ Don Christensen, "Philip Glass," <http://www.philipglass.com/music/recordings/saxophone.php>.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Glass, Philip. *Saxophone Quartet*. London: Chester Music Ltd., 1995.

movement features the baritone saxophone playing a syncopated jazz inspired theme. In the third movement the quartet is marked no louder than *mf* at any point and features a “...laid-back...” tenor saxophone solo. The final movement of the work moves constantly through several time signatures and again as with the second movement, the main theme is jazz influenced.⁵²

Throughout the saxophone quartet version, Glass creates interesting textures through different pairings of instruments. Generally, the most obvious pairings occur between the soprano and alto and the tenor and baritone. At rehearsal mark 15 in the second movement, however, the soprano and baritone are paired playing the melody in octave unison as can be seen in Figure 7. The texture created by the soprano in its upper register and the baritone in its lower register creates interest in the return of the syncopated theme.

The image shows a musical score for a saxophone quartet, specifically measures 51-54. It consists of four staves labeled S. Sax, A. Sax, T. Sax, and B. Sax. The music is written in 7/8 time. The soprano and baritone parts play a syncopated melody in octave unison, while the alto and tenor parts play a more rhythmic accompaniment. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and slurs.

Figure 7: Philip Glass Saxophone Quartet M.51-54

These three compositions are important works in the Rascher quartet’s repertoire. As mentioned above, John-Edward Kelly regarded *XAS* as, ‘one of the most powerful and original contributions to the saxophone quartet repertoire to date’.⁵³ The Philip Glass saxophone quartet was chosen as another example of a prominent composer of the 20th

⁵² Nick Breckenfield, "Philip Glass: Concerto for Saxophone Quartet " http://www.chesternovello.com/default.aspx?TabId=2432&State_3041=2&workId_3041=6397.

⁵³ Xenakis, *Xαε*.

century writing for saxophone quartet. It also an example of the Rascher quartets partnership with various composers in creating works for saxophone quartet and orchestra which James Noyes notes has resulted in 'more than twenty works which have featured the Rascher Quartet with the world's leading orchestras'.⁵⁴ Finally the Wuorinen quartet is representative of the high level of difficulty in the works written for the Rascher quartet.

⁵⁴ Noyes, "Rascher Saxophone Quartet."Pg.33

Chapter 4

Apollo Saxophone Quartet

The Apollo Saxophone Quartet was formed in 1985 and comprised of 4 students, then studying at the Royal Northern College of Manchester. Still performing today the Apollo Saxophone Quartet has commissioned over 100 works, many of which tenor player Andy Scott notes are considered “standard repertoire”.⁵⁵

The Apollo Saxophone Quartet has played an important role in commissioning works from many composers in different styles of music. In addition to commissioning a wide range of composers the Apollo quartet has added to their repertoire with their own compositions. The tenor player Andy Scott’s *His Phantom Sweetheart* was written to accompany a black and white film and features on their album *Words & Pictures*⁵⁶. Will Gregory who spent time playing baritone in Apollo quartet also added several pieces to the repertoire including baritone feature *Hoe Down*, soprano feature *High Life*, tenor feature *Scintillation* and *Birth of a Big Gun* all which have featured on the albums “Works for us” and “words and pictures”.

Sir Richard Rodney Bennett: *Saxophone Quartet*

Sir Richard Rodney Bennett (1936-)

Title: *Saxophone Quartet*

1. Vivo
2. Andante Lento
3. Molto Allegro

Publisher: Novello & Co Ltd

Composed: 1994

Duration: 14:20

⁵⁵ Brown, "Andy Scott."Pg. 18

⁵⁶ "His Phantom Sweetheart," http://www.astute-music.com/shop/product_info.php?products_id=48.

Sir Richard Rodney Bennett has led a diverse musical career. His early studies began with Lennox Berkley and Howard Ferguson as well as Pierre Boulez in Paris.⁵⁷ A prolific composer Bennett has composed and performed in many styles with compositions using serial techniques, traditional harmonies and also influences of jazz harmony.⁵⁸

In his programme notes Bennett explains that it was after hearing one of his television scores played by John Harle that he began placing the instrument in a classical context. Previous to this composition Bennett had already written his Concerto for alto saxophone and his Concerto for tenor saxophone.⁵⁹

The first movement opens with a theme played in unison at an octave. This rhythmic and harmonic structure of this theme returns throughout the movement. Bennett's writing often calls for the saxophone to jump quickly from its lower register to its higher register through this movement. The soprano and alto parts both regularly occupy the upper written register of the instruments. While the Tenor and baritone generally remains in their middle register.

The second movement maintains a quaver pulse passing through several time signatures including 9/8, 6/8, 5/8, 4/8 and 2/8. There are several important roles fulfilled by the different parts in this movement. The movement opens with a slow soprano melody accompanied by moving quavers in the tenor and alto parts as well as a pedal concert G in the baritone. At measure 25 the baritone plays short solo interjections alternating with soprano alto and tenor who operate as a trio. The tenor also plays a solo role at measure 45.

The final movement is a lively 6/8 which is often blurred through the use of cross rhythms. As with the first movement the parts begin in octave unison. At measure 43, the baritone plays short interjections against the other three parts as with the second movement. Throughout the movement each instrument is featured in at some point. The movement closes with a statement of the original theme from movement 1.

⁵⁷ Paul Griffiths and Arnold Whittall, "Bennett, Sir Richard Rodney," *The Oxford Companion to Music*.

⁵⁸ "Bennett, Richard Rodney," *The Oxford Dictionary of Music*.

⁵⁹ Bennett, Richard Rodney. "Richard Rodney Bennett:Saxophone Quartet."

http://www.chesternovello.com/default.aspx?TabId=2432&State_3041=2&workId_3041=11754.

Bob Mintzer: Saxophone Quartet # 1 In Three Movements

Bob Mintzer: (b1953-)

Title: *Quartet #1 In Three Movements*

Publisher: Kendor Music

Composed: 1995

Duration: 9:40

American saxophonist Bob Mintzer has absorbed many musical influences playing with artists such as Buddy Rich, the Thad Jones-Mel Lewis orchestra and the Sam Jones Big band. In addition to also leading his own Big Band Mintzer has produced many arrangements, compositions and also study books.⁶⁰ Describing his book *Playing the Saxophone*, Mintzer says,

This book is a compilation of ideas acquired through playing, teaching and composing music via the saxophone. It encompasses techniques which deal with general musicianship, and then goes on to deal with different styles of saxophone playing (Jazz, Classical, Funk, ect.).⁶¹

Of the composers discussed Mintzer has the most intimate understanding of the instruments that he is composing for.

The first movement, *Allegretto*, is opened by the tenor and baritone saxophones. The baritone plays a Bass line figure while the tenor saxophone plays a syncopated line that compliments the bass line. The alto enters at M. 9 with a syncopated line similar to that of tenor though the two do not line up. At M. 17 when the soprano enters with the syncopated theme the tenor and alto play in rhythmic unison. This texture, with the soprano playing the melody, the baritone providing a bass line and the alto and tenor providing harmonic support returns several times. In contrast with this texture is the section from M. 58-72, where all parts play in rhythmic unison creating chords with suspended fourths, added sevenths and ninths.

⁶⁰ Gilbert Mark, "Mintzer, Bob," *Grove Music Online*.

⁶¹ Bob Mintzer, "Bob Mintzer," www.bobmintzer.com/pubs_detail.php?c=books&i=2.

The second movement marked *slowly*, begins with the saxophones all placed in their lower registers. Throughout the movement the soprano alto and baritone remain in their lower register. The tenor takes the lead at M. 11 while, as with the first movement, the baritone fulfils a bass line role while the soprano and alto provide syncopated harmonic support. The tenor is the highest voice through much of this section due to the low range utilised in the accompanying parts. This movement also features the alto saxophone in an unaccompanied cadenza which explores almost the entire written range of the alto.

The final movement of the quartet again contains syncopated thematic material, where the roles of the instruments are divided into bass line, harmony and melody. At M.65 (Figure 8), the syncopated bass line and accompaniment are contrasted against a lyrical soprano melody. The movement also features several sections where the parts all play in rhythmic and sometimes complete unison.

65 Solo
S. Sax *mf*
A. Sax *mp*
T. Sax *mp*
B. Sax *mp*

Figure 8: Bob Mintzer, Saxophone Quartet #1 in Three Movements, M.65-67

Michael Torke: *July*

Michael Torke: (b1961)

Title: *July*

Publisher: Boosey & Hawkes

Composed: 1995

Duration: 8'

During his studies American composer and pianist Michael Torke won composition prizes in 1977 and 1978 at the Interlochen Academy. Whilst continuing his studies at the Eastman School of Music, Torke began incorporating pop and jazz elements into his music⁶². Torke had previously written for saxophone quartet before this work was commissioned, in works such as *Flint* (1995), *Bone* (1994), *Four Proverbs* (1993) as well a concerto he wrote in 1993 for soprano saxophone⁶³. Torke's style of writing is described as, "...post-Minimalism, a music which utilizes the repetitive structures of a previous generation to incorporate musical techniques from both the classical tradition and the contemporary pop world".⁶⁴

In his program notes Torke comments that,

When writing this piece, keeping in mind the incredible agility of the saxophone, I wrote a series of rapid notes which form a foundation, of a kind of "directory" from which I pull out pitches to assign to those original rhythms (as the notes fly by in real time).⁶⁵

Also in his program notes Torke mentions the pop influence that he used in creating the work saying that,

I've found that if I take a small part of the drum track and assign it to the non-percussion instruments I'm writing for, then interesting things happen. You lose the original context (in this case the baritone sax does not sound like a kick drum), but you gain immediacy and a freshness in the instrumental writing.⁶⁶

Rhett Bender in his analysis comments on several important features in this work. The work begins with the tenor and alto introducing a 16th note ostinato which later transfers to the soprano and baritone. This sixteenth note pattern outlines a tertian harmony, usually changing every 12 measures. Above the ostinato a simpler syncopated melody is contrasted, which is often created through pairings of instruments in interlocking parts. Bender also observes that the syncopations and accents are used in a jazz style.⁶⁷ This division of roles into interlocking duets can be seen in Figure 9 where the soprano and tenor parts interlock with the alto and baritone parts.

⁶² Chute James, "Torke, Michael," *Grove Music Online*.

⁶³ "Michael Torke: Compositions," <http://www.michaeltorke.com/compositions.php?yearcheck=1993>.

⁶⁴ "Michael Torke: Biography," <http://www.michaeltorke.com/bio.html>.

⁶⁵ "Michael Torke: Compositions."

⁶⁶ *Ibid*.

⁶⁷ Bender, *An Annotated Bibliography of Saxophone Quartets by American Composers*. Pg. 104

125

Soprano Saxophone

Alto Saxophone

Tenor Saxophone

Baritone Saxophone

p > tranquil

p > tranquil

Figure 9: Michael Torke, July, M.125-128

The three compositions discussed exemplify the wide array of styles present in the repertoire of the Apollo Saxophone Quartet. *July* in particular combines pop, jazz and minimalist influences and according to Susan Fancher, has become an often performed and popular addition to saxophone quartet repertoire⁶⁸. The quartets by Bob Mintzer and Richard-Rodney Bennett are both examples of repertoire produced by composers who have made significant contributions to classical and jazz saxophone repertoire and in Bob Mintzer's case, saxophone performance.

Chapter 5

Conclusions

Composers

The two works composed for the Mule quartet both come from composers based in France as did much of its early repertoire. As well as the composers discussed, other important

⁶⁸ Susan Fancher, "July," *Saxophone Journal* 25, no. 5 (2001). Pg. 36

works that have remained in the saxophone quartet repertoire were added by Florent Schmitt and Alfred Desenclos. The works dedicated to the Rascher Saxophone Quartet included compositions by Iannis Xenakis, based in France at the time, Charles Wuorinen, an American based composer/performer and Philip Glass also an American based composer/performer. Although based in Germany the members of the Rascher quartet are American and their repertoire reflects this, with a wealth of compositions by European composers and several important works by American composers. The works dedicated to the Apollo Saxophone Quartet included compositions by Sir Richard Rodney Bennett an English composer/performer, Bob Mintzer an American composer/performer and Michael Torke an American composer/performer. The Apollo Saxophone Quartet has cultivated a repertoire including largely British and American composers, including important compositions by Michael Nyman, Graham Fitkin, Sir Richard Rodney Bennett Bob Mintzer, Michael Torke and Howard Skempton. As well as this the members of the Apollo Saxophone Quartet have composed their own music for the ensemble, including works by Tim Redpath, Will Gregory, Rob Buckland and Andy Scott.

In the compositions dedicated to the Rascher and Apollo saxophone quartets, there is evidence that the composers have had a greater awareness of the saxophone's technical and tonal capabilities. There are several instances in the transcription of *Sevilla* by Marcel Mule, where the saxophones are unable to recreate the complete original harmonies of the piano version. As previously mentioned, Xenakis spent time rehearsing with the Rascher quartet before composing *XAS*. Further, Philip Glass was well aware of the music of John Coltrane and Sonny Stitt and often wrote for saxophone in his ensemble. The extensive use of Altissimo in the Rascher Saxophone Quartet's repertoire, demonstrates the influence that the quartet has had on compositions produced for them. Both Torke and Bennett have written extensively for saxophone before approaching the instrument in a quartet format. Finally the composer of *Saxophone Quartet #1 in three movements* Bob Mintzer is himself an accomplished saxophonist who performs in many styles.

Form

The compositions discussed do not suggest that a tradition saxophone quartet form has developed. The Glazunov quartet has three movements while the Bozza is a single movement "character piece". The quartets dedicated to the Rascher quartet consist of two one movement works and a four movement concerto. Although no specific form has become associated with the saxophone quartet, the Rascher quartet has developed the repertoire of saxophone quartet concertos and works with orchestra, which James Noyes notes has resulted in,

more than twenty works which have featured the Rascher Quartet with the world's leading orchestras, including Gewandhaus Leipzig, BBC Symphony London, Dresdner Staatskapelle, Bavarian Radio Orchestra, Helsinki Philharmonic, Swedish Radio Orchestra, Bergen Philharmonic, American composers orchestra, Residentie Orchestra, Orchestre de Paris, Philharmonique de Strassbourg, Stuttgart Chamber Orchestra, Royal Liverpool Philharmonic and I Fiamminghi.⁶⁹

Further, the works by Bennett and Mintzer, for the Apollo quartet both consist of three movements with a fast-slow-fast pattern while the Torke quartet is a single movement work.

Style

There are many styles present in the works discussed above. The Glazunov quartet demonstrates romantic tendencies as well as a neo-classical style in his variations evoking the sounds of Schumann and Chopin. The Bozza quartet also contains similar neo-classical traits as exemplified by the use of parallelism. As the Mule quartet was based in Paris, much of the early repertoire is written in a 20th Century French style. The Xenakis and Wuorinen quartets both contain avant-garde techniques while the Glass Bennett and Torke quartets all contain jazz influences in the writing as well as other styles. There are post minimalist and pop influences present in Torke's *July*, as well as serial influences in Bennett's quartet.

⁶⁹ Noyes, "Rascher Saxophone Quartet."Pg 33

Roles of the instruments

In a similar way that the style of quartet repertoire has developed the roles of the instruments in the quartet have also changed quickly. The mule transcription of Albeniz's *Sevilla* features the soprano saxophone for the majority of the time with small interjections from the other saxophones. This is in contrast with the Glazunov quartet where there is a much greater distribution of thematic material throughout the work. The Bozza quartet features important roles for all of the saxophones, though often the melody is scored in the soprano saxophone part. In both the Xenakis and the Wuorinen quartets the saxophones often play an ensemble role being subservient to the creation of an ensemble sound. The Philip Glass Concerto in contrast features each saxophone with and its unique voice in each movement of the work. Several times in the Mintzer quartet the roles of the instruments are divided into melody, syncopated accompaniment and a baritone bass line. These sections are then contrasted with big 'band-like' like sections where the parts play in rhythmic unison. Torke, however, treats the saxophones differently, dividing them into pairs and creating interlocking parts. The roles of the instruments have not slowly developed from one set of roles to another but rather, have changed to suit the style of music that is being composed, exemplified in the use of the baritone in a bass line role in Mintzer's jazz influenced quartet.

In her discussion of saxophone quartet repertoire, Susan Fancher commented,

These are very exciting times for saxophone quartets. It is becoming more and more common to find saxophone quartets featured on important concert series internationally, and, in the past twenty years, there has been an explosion in the number and quality of new original works for the ensemble. Many well-respected, established composers have written music for saxophone quartet, and there has been a huge contribution of music by young, up-and-coming composers.⁷⁰

Richard Ingham and Eugene Rousseau have also noted that the development of a large body of repertoire for saxophone quartet has taken place in a short amount of time.

⁷⁰ Susan Fancher, "The Saxophone Quartet: Saxophone Quartet Repertoire," *Saxophone Journal* Vol 24, No. 6, no. July/August 2000 (2000).Pg.6

Ingham has further asserted that this development has included a "...high proportion of new works being incorporated into programmes on a trial basis".⁷¹ The Mule, Rascher and Apollo saxophone quartets are all examples of quartets, who through their efforts to commission or create new works, have created their own unique voice as well as providing a solid base of repertoire to continue the development of the ensemble. The rapid creation of repertoire for this ensemble would suggest that its survival depends, on the creation of a unique repertoire and further, that creating a unique voice requires purpose written works, rather than transcriptions.

⁷¹ Ingham, "The Cambridge Companion to the Saxophone."Pg.71

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