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Project Description

Title: Saxophone Repertoire: A Look Into New Compositions from 2000 to 2010

Abstract

Through my research project, I am looking into new saxophone repertoire. Jean Marie Londeix wrote a book titled 150 Years of Music for Saxophone. In his book, he lists all major works written for saxophone, solo or as part of an ensemble, from 1844 to 1994. Unfortunately he has not written later editions since then. I found a webpage designed by an Ithaca College student named Anthony Ballaster. He created similar bibliography, finding recordings of saxophone literature, compiling, annotating, and even leaving links to the publishers' websites. Ballaster's project spanned 1995 to 1999. I intend to pick up where Londeix and Ballaster left off, covering the years 2000 to 2010. This is not important to just me or just music students at BSC, but every legitimate saxophonist. It is difficult to find new, quality compositions, but having one concise listing of new works would make this easier for anyone looking for modern saxophone music.

Research Question:

Where can saxophone students find original repertoire published later than 1999?

Introduction

Through this research project, I want to learn where a saxophone student can find recently composed music, originally written for saxophone. Simply finding the names of modern composers is a great step forward for discovering saxophone literature, but I want to go even further. I want to comb through the works of many different composers and find works that are worth teaching to students. Jean Marie Londeix's book, 150 Years of Music for Saxophone, is like a Bible for saxophonists. It is the most complete resource available, however, it only covers up to the year 1994. In perspective, the internet became popular around 1996. Since then, the internet has become an incredibly useful research tool. But sadly, there is not a definitive saxophone resource published on the internet. There are some resources that have been compiled since 1994, but they are mostly incomplete and are usually lacking annotations. I know in the 10 weeks allotted for this project, I cannot compile a perfect resource, containing every piece of saxophone literature from 1994 to 2010, or even 2000 to 2010. Despite this, it is important to bring together as much information as possible to share with other musicians. The most important goal is to have a stronger grasp on who is composing new works and why should it be worth teaching to students.

I don't actually need a huge amount of costly tools and obscure resources to complete this project. The only tool that I absolutely need to even start this project is Londeix's book 150 Years of Music for Saxophone. I want to model my project similar to how Londeix reports his findings. Other than this book, I will need to find as many publishers and composers as possible. This will include purchasing recordings of performances as well as copies of sheet music. While I expect to pay in full for these recordings and copies, I will also enlist the help of free resources, public libraries, colleagues, professors, even online listings. These recordings and copies of

music are what I will use to compose my annotated bibliography. If time permits, I will have a recording session with Jim Hay, the staff accompanist for Bridgewater State College. Lastly, I will need a poster to present my findings.

In order to complete my project, I will have to learn many different things. First, I will have to contact many different publishers, find out who is composing music for saxophone and where I can find a copy of the music. Once I have a copy of the music, I will have to learn everything I can about the specific composer, style, and technical difficulties. I intend to include every work I find in my bibliography but there is no effective way to rank them other than alphabetically. I may think one composer is better than another but that is a completely subjective way of ranking their works and is not exactly academic. Next, I will select one or two short pieces, and practice them so they would be performance ready by the end of ten weeks allotted for this project

By completing this project, I will affect the way all other saxophone students at Bridgewater State College select their repertoire. It will also affect how I help students choose repertoire when I am teaching one-on-one lessons. A large portion of standard saxophone repertoire is transposed from another instrument. By having more options for original saxophone music, students are able to have a stronger connection with their instrument, and will learn proper technique faster. For example, G.F. Handel's *Sonata No. 3* was originally written in the 1700's for violin, later transcribed for saxophone. In this sonata, there are certain intervals that are much more difficult on the saxophone than on the violin because of the shift in articulation and fingering required. This does not completely discredit Handel's work as a good learning tool for the saxophone, not does this difficulty make it completely impossible to play on the saxophone. But on the other hand, Eugene Bozza's *Aria for Saxophone* was written in 1936 for saxophone contains fewer passages that are awkward on the instrument. This is because Bozza was familiar with the saxophone and could compose works that show off the saxophone's strengths while minimizing its weaknesses. When students aren't held back by technical aspects that are difficult even for professionals, they are more likely to develop a better sense of musicality, or making music rather than simply pressing buttons and playing notes.

Methodology

The first step of my project is collecting sheet music and recordings. There are a few different ways that I can accomplish this. I can call composers and publishers and purchase materials directly through them. I can also utilize free resources, such as public libraries, Bridgewater State College's subscription to the Naxos Music Library, as well as whatever I can have donated to me. My mentor has also agreed to enlist the help of his profession contacts to help find anything they can. I will also attempt to contact Anthony Ballaster, who completed a similar project and could possibly point me in the right direction as to where to find recordings and copies of sheet music.

The next step is sifting through each recording and copy to find specific details about each work. This will divide into two sections for recordings and sheet music, as each medium presents different information. The section for sheet music will have information including: composer, title, date of composition, instrumentation, publisher, price, and range. I also want to include remarks about what makes each piece unique and if it is worthwhile to teach, and I want

to grade each piece, using a 1 to 6 scale, with 1 being easy and 6 being very difficult. The section for recordings will include: performer's name, title, instrumentation, composer, recording company, recording number, release date, and remarks.

The next step includes selecting one or two works to perform. This step and the previous step can happen simultaneously. I can divide up a day's work between analyzing sheet music and recordings, and practicing and selecting works to perform. I must choose an easier piece; otherwise I could spend the entire ten weeks trying to master the technical challenges and expressive nuances. Once I have finally mastered a piece, I will meet with Jim Hay and have it recorded, so I can supplement my bibliography with a work actually taken from the bibliography.

For my final project, I will assemble a professional quality presentation of my work throughout the ten week period. It will include my annotated bibliography, containing two sections, one for sheet music and the other for recordings. I will also have excerpts of selected pieces to demonstrate why certain passages are more or less difficult and awkward than others. Lastly, I will include a recording of my performance of a piece. I believe all of these elements combined will constitute an effective presentation on modern saxophone music, an annotated bibliography of where to find this music, and its effectiveness as a learning tool for students.

Logistics

My research can be conducted mostly at my home. I will have to travel occasionally to meet with my mentor, to pick up copies of music, to meet with Anthony Ballaster, or to have a recording session with Jim Hay.

I expect to have an abundance of resources available. Especially with the onset of jazz in the early 1900's, there has been no shortage of music for saxophone. In fact, the saxophone is currently gaining popularity as an orchestral and a jazz instrument, meaning there are currently more composers writing for saxophone than was twenty years ago. I am only cautious of how much a recording can cost. If one copy of sheet music costs \$30, I may run out of resources quickly. This is why free or low cost venues to acquire copies will be important.

Timeline

Week 1: Acquire as many recordings and copies as possible from publishers, meet with mentor.

Week 2: Same as week 1, except visiting libraries instead of buying from publishers.

Week 3: Meet with mentor, discuss resources he is able to find.

Week 4: Select first piece to present, continue to acquire music, meet with mentor.

Week 5: Intense practice sessions, begin compiling notes on copies and recordings, meet with mentor.

Week 6: Same as week 5.

Week 7: Begin practicing a second piece with intense practice sessions, meet with mentor..

Week 8: Same as week 7.

Week 9: Begin assembling final presentation. Meet with mentor about which piece(s) to record.

Week 10: Recording with Jim Hay. Complete final presentation.

Preliminary Bibliography

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