CONTRASTS

Erick Miranda Hyeji Park Miranda Hannah Kennedy

Sonata in E minor for Flute IWB 58 (1733-1746)

Wilhelm Friedemann Bach (1710-1784), arr. Erick Miranda

I.Allegro mà non tanto
II.Siciliano
III.Vivace

Hyeji Park Miranda (pn.), Erick Miranda (sop. sax)

Suite Cello and Piano Op. 16 (1862-1866)

Camille Saint-Saëns (1835-1921), arr. Erick Miranda

I.Prelude: Moderato Assai
II.Sérénade: Andantino
III.Scherzo: Allegro Grazioso
IV.Romance: Adagio
V.Finale: Allegro con Brio

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I.Verbunkos (Recruiting Dance)
II.Pihenő (Relaxation)
III.Sebes (Fast Dance)

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Lastly, I would like to thank my wife Hyeji Park Miranda who I have shared the greatest moments of my life with. I dedicate this work to my wife Hyeji and my daughter Hajin; I love you both.

Sonata in E minor for Flute IWB 58 (1733-1746)

Wilhelm Friedemann Bach (1710-1784), arr. Erick Miranda

One of two anonymously composed flute sonatas authenticated as lost compositions of W.F Bach, organist/composer, second child and eldest son of J.S. Bach. These two sonatas were likely written in Dresden. During Wilhelm Friedemann's time in Dresden (1733-1746), flute playing reached new levels of technical and expressive skill with court musicians Joachim Quantz, F.J. Götzel, and Pierre-Gabriel Buffardin. These three flutists may have influenced their fellow court musician, W.F. Bach, to write some of the most challenging flute repertoire of the era, including 6 substantial duets for transverse flute much in the style of these flute sonatas.

The Sonata's rhythmic and harmonic ideas look deep into the future. Its wide intervals, highly syncopated gestures, and use of chromaticism are challenging even on the improved keywork of the modern flute.

My passion for this music was sparked by a baroque interpretation class that investigated the music, theories, and teachings of the Baroque era, roughly 1600-1750. While I was researching baroque works to adapt for saxophone, I found this E minor sonata on the 2009 recording "Flute Sonatas by the Bach Sons" by Baroque flutist, Barthold Kuijken. Kuijken's phrasing, ornaments, notes inégales and improvisatory approach to this music was captivating. It remains unlike any baroque interpretation I've heard. The edition used to adapt this master work for saxophone is the Stuttgarter Bach-Ausgaben Urtext from publisher, Carus Verlag.

I. Allegro mà non tanto: Moderate tempo. Fast scales and arpeggios ornament syncopated themes, the skeleton of a dance movement whirls elegantly inside.

II. Siciliano: Siciliano is a baroque dance associated with passion and deep melancholy. Presented here is a Siciliano in a slow 6/8 meter with paired two measures phrases.

III. Vivace: A lively Gigue with technical passages foreshadowing Paganini. There are many rapid melodic leaps stretching beyond a tenth. It's awe-inspiring to imagine 18th-century flutists playing this music on a period instrument.

Suite Cello and Piano Op. 16 (1862-1866)

Camille Saint-Saëns (1835-1921), arr. Erick Miranda

Saint-Saëns was born in Paris and studied composition at the Paris Conservatoire (1848–52). During his lifetime, his success as virtuoso pianist often superseded his reputation as composer. Being judged against Puccini and Strauss made this dynamic more pronounced. Disinterested in modern affect, adept at using historical and regional influences, Saint-Saens' style remained essentially unchanged throughout his career.

Saint-Saëns' Suite for Cello and Piano op. 16 was written around 1862, but published and premiered in 1866. The work was dedicated to cellist Henry-Marie-Joseph Poencet (1834-1873) and premiered by him April 27th, 1866, at Salle Pleyel.Saint-Saëns' fondness for this composition is evident through several adaptations. He reworked the fourth movement, Romance, for horn in 1882 and the entire suite in 1919 for cello and orchestra for Dutch cellist Joseph Hollman. The orchestra version was premiered by Hollman, February 1921, and included a new Gavotte in place of the third movement Scherzo and a Tarantelle replacing the original Finale. Saint-Saëns believed the Scherzo and Finale accompaniments too pianistic for orchestra.

I chose this work to expand the romantic literature available for saxophonists and broaden my own understanding of romantic performance practices. In adapting the Suite for saxophone, I employ the extended techniques slap tonguing, double tonguing, circular breathing and subtone to approximate expressive string playing.

Those modern saxophone colors are rarely used in more traditional harmonic and melodic frameworks. My objective, to find timbres and textures that realize the score and challenge performers to vary their pallete.

In the Baroque, Suites were multi-sectioned pieces with individual movements built on specific dance rhythms. Saint-Saens follows this design with a few alterations.

I. Prelude: Homage to Bach. The moto perpetuo is reminiscent of the preludes in the J.S. Bach cello suites. This endless melody is realized on saxophone by circular breathing, allowing the performer to imitate a cellist's seamless bow strokes. The opening also introduces harmonic and melodic material that will return in each movement.

II. Sérénade: A moderately paced waltz in G minor. The piano part spins light, clear textures, idiomatically French. The melodies lay comfortably on Eb saxophones, allowing the performer to luxuriate in the instrument's stereotypical sensuality.

III. Scherzo: A departure from the Baroque in both style and structure, this movement uses a ternary (A-B-A) form. Here Saint-Saëns displays his pianistic virtuosity in the accompaniment.

IV. Romance: Another movement whose range and expression exceeds a typical Baroque suite. The saxophone part requires the performer to delicately navigate the altissimo, a rare skill. Slap tongue and sub-tone emulate the cello's vast color palette.

V. Finale: The composer combines his trademark fleet pianism with brilliant imitative counterpoint, punctuated by bursts of unison playing. Themes from the Prelude return at the close.

Dancing with the Shadow (1990)

Eleanor Alberga (b.1949) arr. Erick Miranda

Eleanor Alberga is a composer of Jamaican and Ukranian descent. In 1970, she moved to London to study piano and singing. She later became a concert pianist as well as a dancer in the African dance company in London. In 1978, she joined the London Contemporary Dance Theatre as pianist, composer, and musical director. Her dance studies would continue to inform her composing. Originally written for a Pierrot ensemble of flute, clarinet, violin, cello, piano, and percussion, Dancing with the Shadow was commissioned by a chamber group called Lontano and the Sue MacLennan Dance & Co. The work was premiered at the Palace Theatre, UK in 1990 by Lontano, Odaline de la Martinez conducting. The composer describes the work:

I composed Dancing with the Shadow as a 30-minute work in 5 sections, for the choreographer Sue McLennan. The first movement is a duo, the second a trio and so on, culminating in a sextet. Although there is some recurrence of ideas linking the movements, they were each intended to stand as separate entities. The suite was adapted from sections I, IV and V.

The Duo movement is a stand-alone piece in this recording. Its form is three-part. In the first, whole-tone scale melodies set to powerful rhythms. For the middle, a darker, moodier second theme, saxophone and piano in their lowest registers. The final section subtly mixes the diminished qualities of the second theme with the whole tone pitch collections of the first, maintaining the opening rhythmic drive. Light and shadow combine, forming a discrete, third texture. In selecting this piece, the composer's explanation resonated for me: "The title suggests the conscious acceptance of the darker sides of the human psyche to create transformation and unity." My own experiences have taught me to use struggles and successes, darkness and light, to find personal truth.

Contrasts Sz. 111 (1938)

Béla Bartók (1881-1945), arr. Erick Miranda

I became aware of Béla Bartók when Bob Berg (a jazz tenor saxophonist) listed Bartók among his musical influences. Later, another jazz musician whom I admired, Cecil Taylor, also cited Bartók's music. Similar references proliferated until I discovered the value of Bartók's music for myself. Another great jazz pianist and friend, Ron Stabinsky, gifted me a two-disc collection of the Bartók String Quartets by the Emerson String Quartet. After much listening, I made a goal to study and eventually perform some of the composer's oeuvres.

Contrasts was commissioned by American clarinetist Benny Goodman and written in 1938, the latter part of Bela Bartók's life (1881-1945), It's his only chamber composition that includes a wind instrument. The initial idea came from violinist József Szigeti. As Szigeti wrote in a 1938 letter to Bartók:

Please write to Benny Goodman a registered letter in which you agree to write within a given time a 6-7 minute clarinet-violin duo with piano accompaniment, the ownership of which remains yours, but granting him the performance rights for three years. The royalties from performances, radio, and his recordings of course pertain to you. If possible, it would be very good if the composition were to consist of two independent sections (which could perhaps be played separately, as in the Rhapsody no. 1 for violin), and of course we hope it will include a brilliant clarinet and violin cadenza! In any case I can safely say that Benny brings out from the instrument whatever the clarinet is physically able to perform at all, and quite wonderfully, in regions much higher than the high note in “Eulenspiegel”!

This letter was dated August 1938 and Contrasts was completed in September of the same year. Is it possible Bartók already had a concept of the work in three-movements despite Szigeti's suggestion? Bartók's interest in symmetries and palindromes might also explain the third movement. In an orchestration aside, the note Szegeti mentions from Richard Strauss' "Til Eulenspiegel' is a written G6 for "D" Clarinet, sounding as an A6. While Goodman could certainly play that pitch (his climactic high "A" Concert in "Sing, Sing, Sing") , he rarely ventured above it in his playing and certainly not "much" higher.

Contrasts is widely considered a chamber music masterwork, a designation rare in saxophone literature. The original is scored for Goodman's 'A' and 'Bb' clarinets. Its ranges can be rendered by alto saxophone at pitch, covering three and a half octaves (low Bb to altissimo F). Little is idiomatic for saxophone, yet, the instrument's inherent flexibility and dynamism are prerequisites for a starring role in Contrasts.

Nazi forces entered Austria in March of 1938, precipitating the Anschluss. It's likely the martial theme of these folk-derived dances is Bartok's recognition of the approaching storm.

I. Verbunkos (Recruiting Dance): The “slow” section of the two-movement framework originally proposed by Szigeti. Verbunkos refers to a Hungarian method of recruiting soldiers for the famous Hussar regiments. This movement highlights the saxophone's virtuosity of color and technique with violin and piano support. The initial march theme is developed throughout the sonata form, concluding in a virtuosic saxophone cadenza.

II. Pihenő (Relaxation): This middle movement acts as an intermezzo. Melodic figures are often mirrored: saxophone in contrary motion to violin around an axis of symmetry. Throughout, the devices of Bartók's "night music": static, ambiguous harmonies overlaid with fluttering trills and tremolos, sudden crescendos and accelerations that vanish just as abruptly. The brief climax of this night scene occurs close to its midpoint. The ending major sonority sounds contextually dissonant.

III. Sebes (Fast Dance): A rondo movement inspired by a folk tune Hungarian recruits sang before enlistment. The mood is quicksilver. Again, a moment of repose close to the middle. This reprieve, a trio section in 13/8 (a typical Balkan time signature). Not only is the meter palindromic (3+2+3+2+3), but the melodic shapes are also symmetrical and palindromic. The trio leads to a violin cadenza and dramatic recapitulation.

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