Expanding the Oboe - Saxophone Duo Repertoire:

A Study of New Works, Collaboration, and Performance Approaches

by

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ABSTRACT

In this project, an exploration of the oboe - saxophone duo is undertaken from the performance perspective of 21st century oboe - saxophone duets, focusing on the historical contexts of the instruments, physical characteristics, and pedagogical approaches. Drawing on previously published research in neighboring areas of orchestration, chamber music, literature, and collaborative composition processes, the further development of oboe - saxophone duo research is cultivated. This project enriches oboe and saxophone communities by broadening their understanding through recordings, expanding audio repertoire, and adding two new works to their physical collections. In addition, an appendix listing existing oboe - saxophone duets and their purchase and/or download locations is included. Through the analysis of these works, I contribute to a better understanding of the impact of oboe - saxophone duets on chamber music and the importance of this duo combination. I expand not only the perspectives of oboists and saxophonists in collaborative contexts but also knowledge about the commissioning process.

DEDICATION

To my husband and duo partner, and life partner, Matthew. Your unwavering love, encouragement, and patience through this project mean more than you will ever know.

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Furthermore, I want to thank my parents for supporting my musical journey and being my biggest fans. Your love and encouragement have remained steadfast, and I am profoundly grateful for your unwavering support. Finally, I would like to thank my undergraduate oboe professor, Dr. Marlen Vavrikova, for teaching me to believe in myself and to, “When in doubt, play beautifully.”

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Purpose and Scope of the Study

The oboe - saxophone duo remains relatively uncommon and underrepresented within the chamber music community. Due to limited scholarly research, repertoire documentation, and recordings for performers and educators, this duo appears underdeveloped. The primary purpose of this project is to establish a foundational source of scholarly literature dedicated to the oboe - saxophone duo and to demonstrate the ensemble's significance in bringing together the oboe and saxophone communities.

This project offers an overview of the historical development and design of the oboe and saxophone as individual instruments, in chamber ensemble settings, and as a duo, emphasizing their key similarities and differences in construction, performance practices, and pedagogy that make them an engaging and fitting pairing for chamber music. Furthermore, this project catalogs the duo's current accessible repertoire, including new commissions, and situates these works within the broader context of contemporary chamber music. Recording selected works supports this research by providing practical performance examples and expanding access to the duo's recorded library. Together, the written and recorded elements aim to inspire and inform performers, composers, and educators to explore the oboe - saxophone duo. In addition, inquiries into pedagogical methods, like shared musical approaches from etude books, will examine another facet of the duo's cohesion. Ultimately, the collaboration between performers and the commissioning of new works fosters growth for both the creator(s) and the recipient(s).

Limitations and Significance

This project takes the first steps toward comparing these instruments in a chamber duo setting. The oboe - saxophone duo occupies a unique position within contemporary chamber music, situated at the confluence of a shared timbral sound environment and divergent methods of sound production. Although both instruments are capable of expressive lyricism and possess a broad range of color and nuance, differences in overall projection and ergonomic fingerings often complicate and limit their ensemble balance and blending possibilities. While these challenges may be perceived as limitations for this pairing, they also offer opportunities for innovative performance strategies and collaborative problem-solving by performers and composers.

Repertoire Development

The repertoire for the oboe - saxophone duo remains limited, as performance interest did not emerge until the mid-to-late 20th century. Most existing compositions result from individual performer-composer collaborations, presenting similar challenges in balancing dynamics, color, and technical demands for the ensemble. Popular traits for this pairing include wide contrasts in dynamics, color, and musical styles, echoing common stylistic associations of the saxophone with jazz idioms and the oboe with Baroque ornamentation.

Despite the shorter list of current repertoire, the existing music demonstrates a wide range of compositional approaches, including role differentiation and timbral experimentation through extended techniques and vibrato. A distinctive feature of this pairing is the versatility of the oboe and saxophone families, as movements can change tone color and timbre by switching between different voices of the saxophone or oboe

family. This versatility highlights the duo's adaptability and potential for coloristic exploration.

As a crucial component of this project, commissioning and performing new and existing works offer a unified approach to playability and accessibility for the oboe - saxophone pairing and encourage further collaborative work. The six works studied and recorded were selected to represent a range of compositional styles, technical demands, and approaches to the oboe - saxophone pairing. The two newly commissioned works serve as case studies in performer-composer collaboration, while the remaining works illustrate the contextual background of the existing oboe - saxophone duet. Together, these six works illustrate current trends and possibilities for the duo while offering performers practical, alternative insights into rehearsal and performance-based strategies. A curated list of accessible oboe-alto saxophone duet repertoire is provided, excluding unpublished works, scores, or copies that are difficult to obtain, or works insufficiently documented in public databases. Efforts were made to explore a wide range of sources and catalogs, including both national and international listings. This appendix aims to present a representative selection of works rather than an exhaustive list of all possibilities. Although brief, this list reflects the limited number of existing pieces and highlights the scarcity of well-known or openly accessible compositions for this instrumentation.

CHAPTER 2

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

Historical context helps performers and composers understand the instrument's constraints and background. This chapter reviews the histories of the oboe, saxophone, and the hybrid oboe-sax, highlighting their parallel development. It emphasizes their shared engagement with Boehm-system fingerings, thereby strengthening the link between the oboe and saxophone.

The Oboe

The oboe possesses a distinguished history of closely related double-reed instruments that have experienced numerous experiments and innovations over the past few centuries. In Geoffrey Burgess and Bruce Haynes' book *The Oboe*, the significant historical maze of invention and experimentation for this instrument is brought to light. Burgess and Haynes reflect on the claim, advanced by oboe manufacturers and innovators, that greater mechanical complexity diminishes tonal quality.[1] Their claims closely consider how modern oboe design prioritizes a balance between technical facility and the oboe's unique sound production.[2] While innovation continually expands the capabilities of musical instruments, it also brings major trade-offs that are not always beneficial to an instrument's key integral characteristics.[3] Burgess and Haynes thoroughly examine the historical evolution of the oboe, demonstrating extensive knowledge of its ancestral instruments. While it is important to acknowledge the double reed instruments

[1] Burgess, Geoffrey V., and Haynes, Bruce. *The Oboe*. New Haven: Yale University Press. 2004., 182.
[2] Burgess and Bruce. *The Oboe*., 182.
[3] Burgess and Bruce. *The Oboe*., 182.

that predate the Baroque oboe, it does not play a crucial role in this project's research and development.

The first well-established model of the oboe, known as the Baroque oboe, was designed in the late 1600's. The Baroque oboe became standardized in orchestral and solo settings by the late 18th and 19th centuries due to its unique timbral qualities.[4] Significant redesigns throughout these centuries included the addition of right- and left-hand keys, modifications to its bore size and style, and the standardization of left-over-right hand placement.[5] Reasons for further invention included the lack of standardization in keys, tone-hole placement, and bore size among instrument makers.[6] Aspects of individualistic sound and uniqueness were often seen as positive attributes of the Baroque oboe. Before the standardization and expansion of other instruments in orchestral settings, this was a valued characteristic.

However, by the 18th century, these individualistic traits became an obstacle for oboists, as it gradually affected their ability to collaborate and hindered their efforts to modernize within the orchestral environment. By the 18th century, standardization of the oboe's physical characteristics, including its bore and fingering system, became essential.[7] The standardization of a fingering and key system became a prevalent and marketable idea, with the early development of a conservatory model being released in the latter portion of the 18th century.[8] These conservatory-model instruments provided

[4] Howe, Robert. "The Boehm System Oboe and Its Role in the Development of the Modern Oboe." *The Galpin Society Journal* 56 (2003): 37.
[5] Howe. "The Boehm System Oboe and Its Role in the Development of the Modern Oboe.," 37.
[6] Howe. "The Boehm System Oboe and Its Role in the Development of the Modern Oboe.," 37.
[7] Howe. "The Boehm System Oboe and Its Role in the Development of the Modern Oboe.," 37.
[8] Howe. "The Boehm System Oboe and Its Role in the Development of the Modern Oboe.," 37.

greater stability and consistency across numerous countries and pedagogically enabled greater standardization of technical skills and learning.

The development of the modern oboe as it is used today was initiated by flutist, composer, inventor, and jeweler Theobald Boehm. Boehm's experimentation with flute construction heavily influenced the woodwind world.[9] By 1846, Boehm had patented the fully developed Boehm system for the flute, featuring an innovative key and fingering design.[10] This system mechanically linked tone holes with rods, positioning keys anatomically to improve intonation, simplify fingering, and ensure full venting. Although Boehm himself did not construct an oboe that directly influenced later oboe makers, many of his design principles inspired them.

Oboe makers noted Boehm's flute design and adapted elements of his system to the oboe, thereby calling the original versions the "Boehm oboe." The "Boehm oboe" offered a logical fingering system that eliminated cross-fingerings, half-hole fingerings, and short fingerings in the second octave, giving it an advantage over other conservatory models by European head oboe makers like Guillaime Triébert.[11] Unfortunately, not all of Boehm's system translated well to the oboe. Notably, on the Boehm oboes, the increased loudness of the tone resulted from the wider bore measurements, which had a more dynamically conical shape combined with larger overall toneholes in the upper joint.[12] This aspect of the "Boehm oboe" was aligned with Boehm's objective during the

[9] Howe, Robert. "The Boehm System Oboe and Its Role in the Development of the Modern Oboe," *The Galpin Society Journal* 56 (2003): 37.
[10] Howe. "The Boehm System Oboe and Its Role in the Development of the Modern Oboe.," 39.
[11] Howe. "The Boehm System Oboe and Its Role in the Development of the Modern Oboe.," 39.
[12] Howe. "The Boehm System Oboe and Its Role in the Development of the Modern Oboe.," 39.

innovation of the flute, as the flute previously lacked a broad dynamic range.[13] While this effect enhanced the flute, it had a negative impact on the oboe, as it augmented the oboe's original tone too drastically.[14]

Figure 1. Boehm system oboes produced from left to right: Adolphe Sax, 1860; Maison David, 1883; Berteling, 1894; Couesnon (Triébert), 1911; Martin, 1905; Buffet-Crampon, 1922.

By the 1900s, François Lorée, the final foreman of the renowned oboe maker Frédéric Triébert, son of Guillaime, devised his own modified version of the oboe. In the transition to the 20th century, Lorée integrated the technical advantages of Boehm system fingerings for F and F#, while preserving the oboe's conventional conical bore design and tone holes. This approach ensured the retention of the traditional tonal quality valued by

[13] Howe. "The Boehm System Oboe and Its Role in the Development of the Modern Oboe.," 39.
[14] Howe, Robert. "The Boehm System Oboe and Its Role in the Development of the Modern Oboe," *The Galpin Society Journal* 56 (2003): 39.

audiences and oboists alike. Ultimately, the Lorée oboe model gained worldwide acclaim and remains the forefather of oboe conservatory models used by oboists today.

Figure 2. The modern oboe family from left to right: Heckelphone, bass oboe, English horn, oboe d'amore, oboe, musette.

Figure 3. The finalized six members of the saxophone family from left to right: sopranino, soprano, alto, tenor, baritone, and bass.

The Saxophone

Belgian musician and instrument maker Antoine-Joseph Sax, better known as Adolphe Sax, patented a range of eight saxophones in 1846.[15] Sax's main goal with the saxophone was to develop the largest number of registers in an instrument family, with the encouragement of incorporating his instruments into the orchestra.[16] Following its success, the family was finalized to include E-flat sopranino, B-flat soprano, E-flat alto, B-flat tenor, E-flat baritone, B-flat bass, and E-flat contrabass.

In 1857, Sax was appointed as the saxophone teacher at the Paris Conservatoire, training approximately 130 saxophonists in his early years.[17] Early saxophones, made of brass, employed fingerings borrowed from nearby woodwind instruments such as the flute and clarinet. Théobald Boehm's keywork mechanism was integrated into the saxophone from the

[15] Cottrell, Stephen. *The saxophone*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012., 16.
[16] Selmer Paris, Henri. "The Invention of the Saxophone by the Great Adolphe Sax." Accessed January 1, 2026.
[17] Cottrell. *The Saxophone*., 16.

beginning, enhancing its ergonomics, tuning, and ease of play. Initially, the instrument's use in ensembles was limited, as composers did not immediately adopt it, but it found a foothold in military bands, where its conical bore, projection, and tone suited their needs well.[18] In 1885, Selmer Paris revolutionized saxophone design by improving weight, reliability, and aesthetics.[19] With the rise of jazz in America, Selmer promoted the saxophone as a key instrument in this genre.[20]

The Oboe-Sax

The oboe-sax, shown in Figure 4,[21] is arguably one of the quirkiest instruments ever created and was invented in the 1920s by oboe maker Lorée. Along with other lesser-known oboe makers, Lorée sought to capitalize on the American fascination with saxophones by introducing this invention.[22] The instrument resembled an oboe but featured saxophone fingerings and, depending on the maker, used either a single reed or a smaller double-reed mouthpiece. The idea was to help saxophonists who double on the oboe expand their options, with the instrument intended for use in woodwind doubler settings and potential incorporation into jazz performances. However, the oboe-sax failed to become a popular addition to the doubler's repertoire and ultimately lost traction in sales.[23]

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[18] Cottrell, Stephen. *The saxophone*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012., 16.
[19] Selmer Paris, Henri. "The Invention of the Saxophone by the Great Adolphe Sax." Accessed January 1, 2026.
[20] Selmer Paris. "The Invention of the Saxophone by the Great Adolphe Sax." Accessed January 1, 2026.
[21] Hurd, Peter. *A Variety of Soprano C sax-type instruments from Left to right: Curved C Soprano, straight C Soprano, and an oboe-sax with a single reed mouthpiece*. N.d. Accessed January 1, 2026.
[22] Hurd. *A Variety of Soprano C sax-type instruments from Left to right: Curved C Soprano, straight C Soprano, and an oboe-sax with a single reed mouthpiece*. Accessed January 1, 2026.
[23] Howe, Robert. "The Boehm System Oboe and Its Role in the Development of the Modern Oboe," *The Galpin Society Journal* 56 (2003): 47-48.

Figure 4. A variety of soprano sax-type instruments in the key of C, from left to right: Curved C soprano, straight C soprano, and an oboe - saxophone with a single reed mouthpiece with the Lorée logo on the bell.

CHAPTER 3

CHAMBER MUSIC OVERVIEW

A Brief Definition of Chamber Music

Researching the history of chamber music and its overall definition can be complex due to its diverse styles and instrumentation. According to *The Oxford Companion to Music*, chamber music denotes "soloistic instrumental music for small ensemble." The term "chamber music" was originally distinguished as a small, intimate vocal ensemble from a larger, full ensemble—ideal for a home setting rather than larger venues such as churches or outdoor events.[24] Over the past few centuries, the definition of this term has evolved, and its significance has become increasingly conceptual.

Chamber music, as a genre, gradually evolved, distinguished by its performance contexts, instrumentation, and audience.[25] Early forms of smaller-ensemble collaboration, best defined as chamber music in today's terms, often highlighted one performer on a part and were used in smaller dance settings in the early 15th century. These collaborations often featured a reduced number of musicians, with one player on a part, and often included vocalists and audience involvement in 'hand clapping and foot stomping.'[26] By the 16th and 17th centuries, chamber-like ensembles gained popularity in the wealthy and aristocratic households. Splitting into two styles of chamber music, one featuring a louder ensemble of instruments, such as heavier brass and percussion, often used in larger outdoor settings for ceremonies and festivals. The other style, producing softer dynamic instruments and smaller, more residential sized spaces, with harp, strings,

[24] Baron, John H. *Intimate Music: A History of the Idea of Chamber Music*. Pendragon Press, 1998., 1-2.
[25] Baron. *Intimate Music: A History of the Idea of Chamber Music.*, 1-2.
[26] Baron. *Intimate Music: A History of the Idea of Chamber Music.*, 1-2.

voice, and flute.[27] Prior to the 17th century, these chamber ensembles were predominantly utilized by the wealthy and royalty. However, with the advent of the printing press and the dissemination of sheet music in subsequent centuries, enthusiasts and amateur musicians gained the ability to perform in chamber music contexts and compose music independently of professional environments.[28]

In the 18th century, chamber music significantly influenced the evolution of orchestral music, which increasingly prioritized string instruments over wind instruments. During this period, the standardization of string quartets and orchestral instrumentation became more common.[29] Following this trend, by the late 1700s, the oboe's role in chamber music was recognized, though it was not yet a standard compositional instrument.[30] It was only after Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart composed the Oboe Quartet KV 370 for Friedrich Ramm, one of Europe's leading oboists, that the oboe was featured with concertante elements. Early notable examples of woodwind quintet music include compositions by Giuseppe Maria Gioacchino Cambini, an Italian composer active from the late 1700's to early 1800's, who wrote many chamber ensemble pieces.[31] During the 19th century, the genre saw an increase in material and a new perspective, with composers experimenting with unusual instrumentations.[32] As rhythm and harmonic complexity grew, the mid to late 1900's offered opportunities for innovative chamber music. Many composers known primarily for orchestral works, such as Igor Stravinsky and the French

[27] Baron. *Intimate Music: A History of the Idea of Chamber Music.*, 1-2.
[28] Baron, John H. *Intimate Music: A History of the Idea of Chamber Music*. Pendragon Press, 1998., 1-2.
[29] Baron. *Intimate Music: A History of the Idea of Chamber Music.*, 1-2.
[30] Baron. *Intimate Music: A History of the Idea of Chamber Music.*, 11.
[31] Baron. *Intimate Music: A History of the Idea of Chamber Music.*, 11.
[32] Baron. *Intimate Music: A History of the Idea of Chamber Music.*, 11.

Impressionists Claude Debussy and Maurice Ravel, turned to chamber music because of the difficulty of assembling a full symphony orchestra during World War I.[33]

The Oboe and Saxophone, together in Chamber Music

Notably, the reed quintet is a relatively recent addition to chamber ensembles and stands out as one of the first chamber group settings to combine both the oboe and the saxophone in a complementary way. Initially established as a quartet, Calefax was formed in 1985; its principal members were high school students from the Netherlands, and its original instrumentation consisted of two saxophones, oboe, and bassoon.[34] Calefax shifted its instrumentation within the first few years in an effort to achieve the highest level of balance among double and single reed instruments.[35] By 1997, the ensemble had settled on the reed quintet instrumentation: oboe, alto saxophone, bassoon, Bb clarinet, and bass clarinet.[36] Closely resembling the traditional woodwind quintet placement, replacing the horn with a bass clarinet for arguably wider color matching between the other reeds and the flute with a saxophone, to further match timbre. The reed quintet consists of all reed instruments, working in this musical medium without precedent. Calefax rapidly built a repertoire for the reed quintet, including new commissions and arrangements.

By 2004, Calefax issued a new edition of sheet music and launched a reed quintet repertoire database, rapidly establishing the reed quintet as a stable ensemble in the

[33] Margolis, Sasha. “The Rise of the Reed Quintet.” *Chamber Music of America*, 2019.
[34] Szabo, Natalie. "An Introduction to the Reed Quintet and its Repertoire," *The Clarinet* 50, no. 2 (2023): 70.
[35] Szabo. "An Introduction to the Reed Quintet and its Repertoire," 70.
[36] Szabo. "An Introduction to the Reed Quintet and its Repertoire," 70.

chamber music community.[37] Because of Calefax's innovation, the oboe and saxophone are able to perform and collaborate in a chamber setting.[38] Kyle Bruckmann, American oboist, composer, educator, and current oboist with one of the most successful reed quintets, Splinter Reeds, expands on his view of the reed quintet. Bruckmann explains that the wind quintet does not encompass the same range of musical expression as the string quartet, mainly because the two ensembles have little to no similarity in their sound production. Sound production has a significant impact on an instrument's musical spectrum and capabilities. String quartets can produce sound at different volumes and timbres, as string instruments create sound by vibrating their strings with their bows; woodwind instruments produce sound by vibrating a reed against a mouthpiece or another reed; and brass instruments use their lips to create vibrations that are amplified by their mouthpieces.

The original members of Calefax pioneered the woodwind quintet instrumentation by replacing the flute with a saxophone and the French horn with a bass clarinet. Replacing these instruments with like instruments in sound production, all reed vibration, sound-producing instruments, allowed for the potential of a more cohesive blend in timbre and sound palette.[39] Bruckmann emphasizes this newly defined concept for sound blending: "We have a lot of individual personality, and we have the option to crawl into each other's sounds and make something that is twice as loud and boisterous and rich in overtones as a string quartet could ever dream of being."[40] Following the establishment of

[37] The Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center. "What Is Chamber Music?," Accessed January 1, 2026.
[38] The Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center. "What Is Chamber Music?," Accessed January 1, 2026.
[39] The Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, "What Is Chamber Music?," Accessed January 1, 2026.
[40] The Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, "What Is Chamber Music?," Accessed January 1, 2026.

Calefax in the early 2000s and its subsequent success as a recognized instrumentation for a chamber ensemble, reed quintets began to form rapidly. This innovative ensemble configuration gained significant momentum as musicians progressively explored its potential. As these ensembles continued to emerge and develop, a consistent emphasis on originality in the reed quintet sound was cultivated. The reed quintet emphasizes the creative potential of the oboe and saxophone, challenging musical conventions through transcriptions and redefining their roles within chamber ensembles.

CHAPTER 4

FOUNDATIONS OF THE OBOE - SAXOPHONE DUO

In chamber music settings, specific acoustic and expressive attributes are of paramount importance to the way instruments collaborate. Factors including dynamics, timbre, and vibrato significantly influence an instrument's capacity to harmonize and achieve balance within an ensemble. When combining the oboe and saxophone in a duet setting, it is important to note that their individual strengths can also have negative consequences unless properly educated and cared for. The musical attribute of dynamics is highly restrictive on the oboe when compared to the saxophone, mainly due to its differences related to the bell, physical material, and mouthpiece. Other characteristics that show a dynamic range or comparable, clash-worthy musicality are vibrato production. Foundational to the oboe - saxophone duo, these attributes are to be highlighted. Highlighting these differences, the oboe's sound is described as more focused and penetrating, while the saxophones' broader, more flexible sonority ultimately demands a nuanced negotiation and a musically conversant collaborative setting. The following subsections examine a few key characteristics and acoustical implications that underpin the structural and aesthetic identity of the saxophone-oboe duo.

Musical Characteristics through Vibrato

Producing vibrato on a wind instrument in general can be complex, as there are several methods of vibrato production that can be used. Even though each instrument may generate vibrato through unique means, the resulting sound, especially between the oboe and saxophone, can share strikingly similar qualities. Breath vibrato, finger vibrato, jaw vibrato, and even "vibrato production achieved by shaking the instrument" are

documented as workable techniques.[41] The most prevalent vibrato among saxophonists is jaw vibrato, which can be most accurately described as a continuous movement of the jaw oscillating vertically while maintaining consistent air pressure through the mouthpiece.[42] Through this production of vibrato, the tuning of the main note often shifts, producing a downward wave in the sound.[43] Although saxophonists predominantly utilize jaw vibrato, it is not regarded as an effective technique for generating desirable vibrato on the oboe. This is primarily because the oboe's double reed causes jaw vibrato to produce excessive pitch fluctuation and tonal instability.

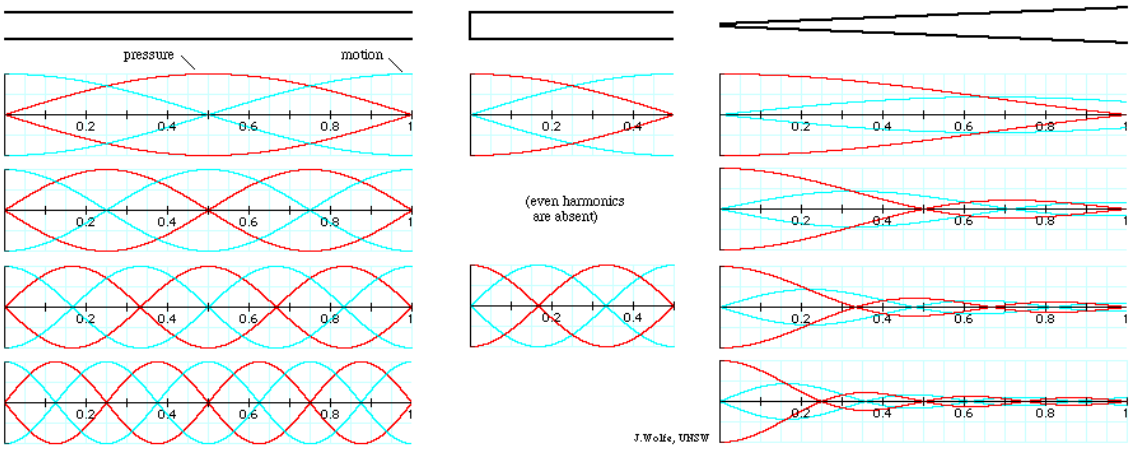
Diaphragmatic-abdominal vibrato is a widely used technique among oboists that, when properly learned, produces a smooth, full sound with many advantageous qualities. This method of vibrato production is best described as a variation in sound produced by an impulse originating from the abdominal muscles, which causes the diaphragm to rise.[44] It is important to note that the diaphragm remains passive throughout the production of diaphragmatic-abdominal vibrato, a distinctive feature shown in more recent studies. Other methods have been used by oboists, but do not produce the same desired sound as the diaphragmatic-abdominal method. The physical and mechanical differences between reeds (single versus double) directly influence how a performer conceptualizes vibrato.

[41] Calderón de Luis, Elena. "The Vibrato on the Oboe." Göteborgs universitet, 2019., 15.
[42] Calderón de Luis. "The Vibrato on the Oboe.," 15.
[43] Calderón de Luis. "The Vibrato on the Oboe.," 15.
[44] Calderón de Luis. "The Vibrato on the Oboe.," 15.

Bore Style and Projection

While the oboe and saxophone differ in dynamic range, material, sound production, and the number of reeds, they share one important trait: a conical bore. This factor reflects similarities in tone quality, unlike instruments such as the clarinet and the flute, which have cylindrical bores. The sound-pressure and amplitude waves shown in Figure 5 are inherently different between the cylindrical and conical bore styles.[45] Vibrato production and sound often align with instruments that share a similar bore shape, as air pressure and patterns illustrate vibrato and timbral relations.

Figure 5. Illustrating the three commonly used bore styles among woodwind instruments. Highlighting their sound pressure through the red lines and amplitude through the blue lines.



It is evident that the saxophone possesses a significantly broader dynamic range compared to the oboe. The substantial disparity in dynamic range can be attributed to various factors: the materials used in the construction of the instruments, the sound

[45] Wolfe, J. A., A. Almeida, J. M. Chen, D. George, N. N. Hanna, J. R. Smith. Edited by R. Bresin and A. Askenfelt. "The Player-Wind Instrument Interaction." *In Proceedings of the Stockholm Music Acoustics Conference*. Stockholm, 2013: 323–330.

production from their mouthpieces, and the overall length of the instruments. The brass body of the saxophone was predominantly manufactured due to Sax's favorable association with brass, as well as the vibrancy that this material facilitated for.[46]

The result of such a wide dynamic range between the saxophone and the oboe can be explained by several basic principles. The saxophone's metal construction emphasizes vibrations from the mouthpiece, while the oboe, made of a more porous material—wood—amplifies vibrations, though not as much as metal. Besides their different materials, the oboe's length is much shorter, whereas the saxophone's bell is nearly three times longer. Figure 5 illustrates that the saxophone can be manufactured in a curved or straight configuration.

[46] Yamaha. "The Origins of the Saxophone." *Yamaha Corporation.* 2026.

CHAPTER 5

ENSEMBLE STRATEGIES AND COMMISSIONING NEW WORKS

Rehearsal Strategies for Mixed-Reed Ensembles

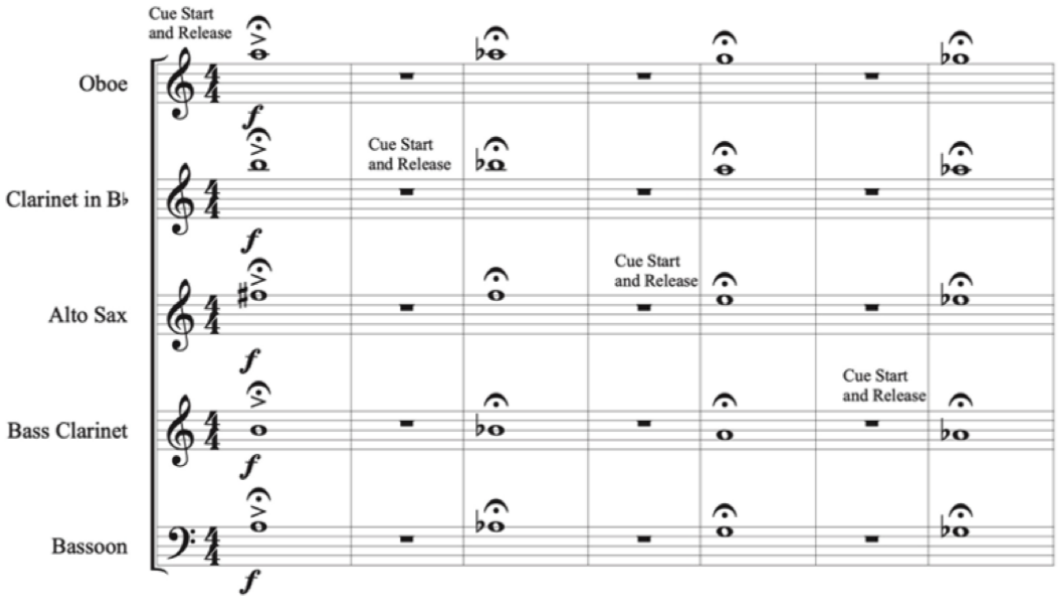
Effective performance in chamber music is rooted in refined communication in both rehearsal and performance settings. As the most intimate form of ensemble collaboration, the duo comprises two musicians who develop a shared perspective on artistic and visionary responsibility.[47] In "Musicians in the Making: Pathways to Creative Performance," writer Jane Ginsborg examines ensemble rehearsal practices. Ginsborg is well known for her research on contemporary music, particularly in vocal performance, as she is a professional vocalist herself. Her research expanded into music psychology, where she later became a renowned specialist. Currently, Ginsborg is a professor at the Royal Northern College of Music, focusing on how musicians learn, perform, and memorize music.[48]

Ultimately, variables such as ensemble instrumentation and size, performance date, rehearsal schedule, music, and level of musicianship influence the activities conducted during a rehearsal.[49] In mixed-reed ensembles, including the oboe - saxophone duo, rehearsals extend beyond merely coordinating rhythm and pitch to encompass the negotiation of both verbal and nonverbal communication. The question of who should assume the role of cuing the ensemble is explored in Benjamin MacDonald's dissertation, "Fundamental Approach for Reed Quintet: A Method Book for Developing Chamber

[47] Ginsborg, Jane. "Small ensembles in rehearsal." *Musicians in the making: Pathways to creative performance* (2017): 166-167.
[48] Ginsborg, Jane. "Jane Ginsborg." *Royal Northern College of Music*. Accessed March 29, 2026.
[49] Ginsborg. "Small ensembles in rehearsal.," 167.

Musicians," featuring a chordal exercise that dictates who leads each chord, shown in figure 6.[50] Considering the historically prominent roles of the oboe and the saxophone in ensemble settings, this exercise assumes substantial significance. Establishing a common role effectively facilitates the development of a nexus between these two instruments. These rehearsals serve not merely as preparatory activities, but are fundamental, primarily focused on the sharing and conceptualization of a cohesive sound and style. Other shared elements may encompass dynamic relevance, vibrato characterization, and breathing technique plans[51]

Figure 6. "Reading Cues" Exercise. Dictation for cuing the start and release of each chord.



[50] MacDonald, Benjamin. "Fundamental Approach for Reed Quintet: A Method Book for Developing Chamber Musicians." D.M.A. diss., Arizona State University, 2023.
[51] Ginsborg, Jane. "Small ensembles in rehearsal." *Musicians in the making: Pathways to creative performance* (2017): 172.

Performer-Composer Collaboration

One of the most unique features of musical collaboration involves the process of commissioning. Historically, commissioning is defined as the formal act of requesting and financially supporting a composer to create a new work, typically with the performer initiating the collaboration.[52] Through the process of commissioning, the expansion of repertoire, experimentation with new instrumental combinations, the development of musical styles, and the fostering of collaborative relationships between composers and performers have taken shape. The act of commissioning dates back centuries, although the balance between composer and performer has changed.

By the mid-20th century, a more collaborative trend emerged in contemporary music.[53] Sanne Groth, the author of "Composer on Stage: Ambiguous Authorship in Contemporary Music Performance," states that the collaboration between performer and composer has expanded beyond just writing music and now involves them in the overall production of the music. "A practice in which composers no longer remain behind their desks to write scores, addressing professional musicians instead, engaging with several aspects in the process of creating a work: the concept, rehearsals, production, staging, and, finally, being present at the performance either off or on stage."[54] Composers are more likely to be part of the production process in recording studios, collaborating with performers to help produce a recording that balances the performer's and the composer's visions.

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[52] Kennedy, Michael, and Kennedy, Joyce. *The Oxford Dictionary of Music*. 6th ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012.
[53] Smith, Jonathan. "The Dynamics of Composer-Performer Relationships: A Study of Long-Term Creative Collaboration." D.M.A. diss., University of Toronto (Canada)., 24.
[54] Groth, "Composers on Stage: Ambiguous Authorship in Contemporary Music Performance," 693.

Three Reeds Duo

The Three Reeds Duo, consisting of Leah and Paul Forsyth, is one of the most successful oboe - saxophone duos. In an interview with Civitasolis, a reed quintet formed in Tallahassee, Florida, Paul explains that the duo's first performance was at a NASA festival in 2005.[55] For that performance, the duo played Francis Poulenc's *Trio for oboe, bassoon, and piano, FP 43*, with the bassoon line transcribed for tenor saxophone. The duo's original goal was to collaborate, but the lack of accessible works for this pairing ultimately led them to commission new pieces and build a repertoire for the oboe - saxophone duo. Their commissioning efforts were successful and led to the further goal of inspiring other instrumental duos to branch out and try new compositions.[56]

[55] Civitasolis Quintet, "Happy Hour with Cititasolis: Interview with Three Reeds Duo," YouTube, February 2021, video, 49:20.
[56] Civitasolis Quintet, "Happy Hour with Cititasolis: Interview with Three Reeds Duo," YouTube, February 2021, video, 49:20.

CHAPTER 6

PERFORMANCE PERSPECTIVE OF SELECTED WORKS

This dissertation project includes six compositions: two commissions by Arizona State University alumni, two pieces originally written for the oboe - saxophone duo, and two arrangements independently undertaken to expand the duo's repertoire. The main goal of this project was to broaden the oboe - saxophone repertoire and create more compositions that balance the technical demands of both instruments more fairly. When addressing the commission segment of this project, both composers were provided with identical objectives: to enhance the accessibility of the oboe line by ensuring comfortable finger alternations, a suitable dynamic range, a manageable note range, and an easy-to-follow breathing plan, all while preserving a unified contemporary musical tonality.

Steadfast by Derek Brown

Composer Biography

American saxophonist, composer, and performer Derek Brown (b. 1984) is recognized for his innovative approach to expanding the saxophone's sonic possibilities. Brown's work draws on extended techniques such as slap-tonguing, circular breathing, and other percussive stylistic elements. By utilizing the saxophone's single-reed capabilities of slap-tonguing and foot stomping, Brown creates a multi-dimensional sound that often resembles a beatbox-style groove without the use of multimedia or additional accompaniment. His music is particularly notable for its ability to cross genres while maintaining a raw, authentic, unprocessed performance style.[57]

[57] Brown, Derek. "Biography." Accessed January 1, 2026.

Through his solo tenor saxophone piece titled *South Haven,* released on YouTube in 2016, Brown gained widespread recognition within the saxophone community. *South Haven* showcases Brown's unique compositional style through his use of two lines for the solo saxophonist to perform simultaneously. The top line features the main melodic material played on the saxophone, while the bottom line indicates a literal finger ring slap and stomp. This dual-line notation emphasizes his focus on rhythmic independence and physical interaction with the instrument. Similar techniques and notation appear in works such as *Steadfast,* a duo for oboe and saxophone, further demonstrating his ongoing exploration of texture, coordination, and an extended beatbox-style approach.

Program Notes

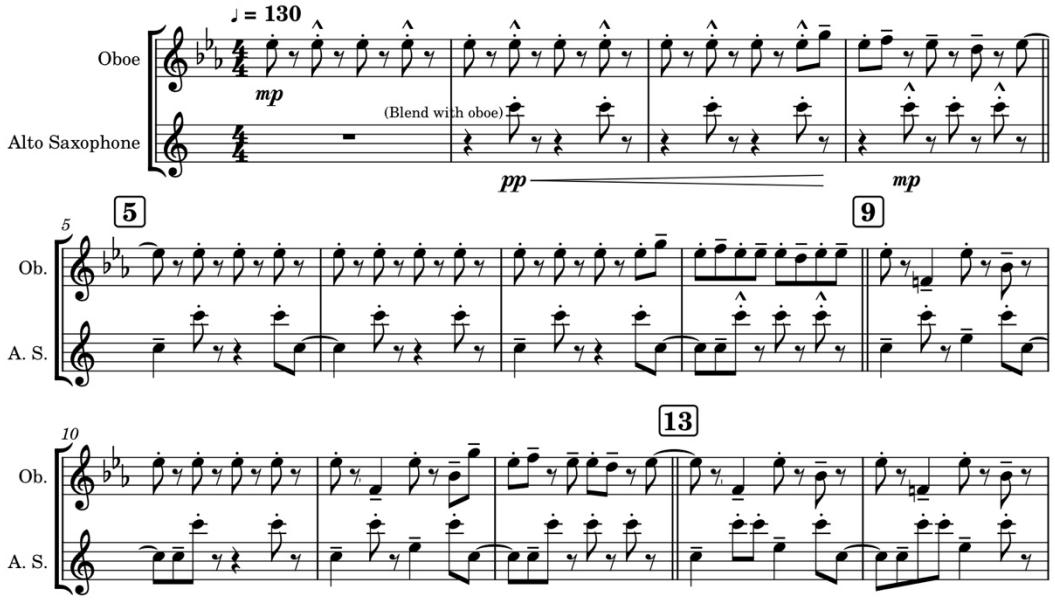
Steadfast showcases Brown's distinctive compositional style, called "BEATBoX SAX."[58] Instead of relying on unconventional foot-stomping or ring-tapping, Brown uses oboe and saxophone lines to craft a unified melodic and rhythmic groove. Debuted by the "Three Reeds Duo" at the 2023 NASA Biennial Conference, *Steadfast* offers a fresh take on oboe - saxophone duo repertoire by incorporating both instruments in a percussive manner, a novel approach.[59] Being less than five minutes in length, *Steadfast* delivers a high-energy, beatbox-inspired groove that emphasizes percussive playing of both instruments.

[58] Brown, Derek. "Biography." Accessed January 1, 2026.
[59] Brown, Derek. "Biography." Accessed January 1, 2026.

Performance Guide

Preparation for this piece involved rhythmic and accent practice. A common issue is overblowing the dynamic levels, which can cause embouchure fatigue. Although the dynamics are wide, a conservative approach in the opening pages is more effective for the oboist, both musically and physically. The fifteen measures have limited exhalation and inhalation moments, making this section one of the most physically demanding parts of the piece. Running through the piece to establish finger alternations and a solid breathing plan for both exhales and inhales is crucial for success in a performance setting.

Figure 7. Derek Brown: *Steadfast*, measures 1-15.



Rehearsing this piece led to frequent discussions regarding “matching verse balancing.” Although a dynamic level is designated as forte, the alternative perspective was prioritized. Measures 1-15 are notated in the mezzo-piano dynamic range. While the oboe commences this composition at a comfortable mezzo-forte, Brown deliberately

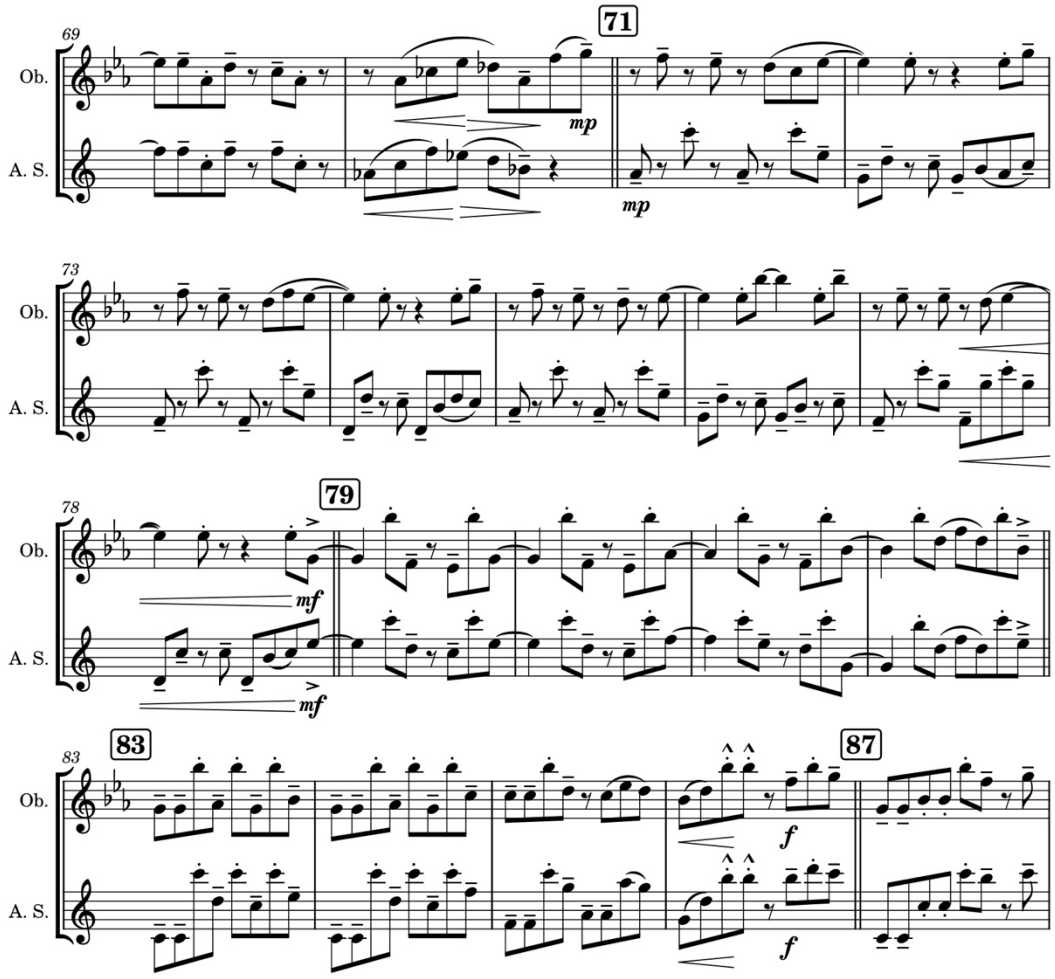
marked measure 2 with pianissimo for the saxophone line, considering that the saxophone has a single reed and can vibrate at a significantly softer dynamic than the oboe. Brown additionally annotates “Blend with oboe,” suggesting that the saxophone’s sound should emerge from the oboe’s sound, thereby employing a strategic use of dynamics that leverages the strengths of both instruments.

Regarding the passage beginning at measure 71, both lines are written at mezzo-piano, which prompted a discussion about matching versus balancing. The oboe line constitutes the primary melodic material and must be emphasized. This effect was achieved through a combination of balancing and vibrato. In the oboe line, the legato markings were subtly weighted with vibrato to enhance a distinctive tonal color for the melodic line. *Steadfast* dictates a wide variety of articulations throughout the composition. Although both instruments possess the ability to produce short and percussive articulations, the oboe’s double reed inherently produces a notably shorter articulation compared to the saxophone’s single reed. Consequently, it was necessary to account for the overall “shortness” of staccatos when making comparisons to the saxophonist.

Timbre matching played a vital role in our approach to the unison material in measures 79-87, seen in Figure 8. We selected a style characterized by minimal vibrato and heavily weighted legatos, ensuring that the lower unisons contained more overtones to facilitate an in-tune sound. For the oboist, it is relatively easy to play sharp on the lower notes in this section, primarily due to the extensive octave range. Conversely, the saxophone is likely to produce slightly lower intonation on pitches near measure 83, as shown in Figure 8. Cognitively understanding each instrument’s tendencies resolved this

potential intonation issue, with both players adjusting their pitches. Overall, this piece illustrated differences in articulation production between the oboe and the saxophone, as well as variations in dynamics and balance.

Figure 8. Derek Brown: *Steadfast*, measures 69-87.



Duo Displasia by Alyssa Morris

I. Prelude

II. Courante

III. Loure

IV. Gigue

Composer Biography

American oboist and composer Alyssa Morris (b. 1984) is the current professor of Oboe and Music Theory at Kansas State University, acting principal of the Topeka Symphony Orchestra and Chamber Orchestra of Smoky Valley, and a member of the AGLOW trio.[60] Morris' music has been presented at several conventions, including the International Double Reed Conventions, the Japan Double Reed Society Convention, the National Flute Association Convention, the National Clarinet Association's ClarinetFest, and the Society of Composers Inc. National Convention. Morris' compositions are best known for their virtuosic melodic material, wide range of moods, and strong imagery.[61] Popular among double reed players, Morris' music creates fun imagery by highlighting the buoyant and quirky characteristics of both the oboe and bassoon. Works such as *Up and Away (2014),* written for oboe, bassoon, and piano; *Four Personalities (2007),* written for oboe and piano; and *Collision Etudes (2017),* written for solo oboe, highlight fine text painting through melodic phrasing and a wide range of colorful stylistic approaches.

[60] Morris, Alyssa. "Bio." Accessed January 1, 2026.
[61] Morris, Alyssa. "Bio." Accessed January 1, 2026.

Program Notes

Duo Displasia, a four-movement suite and the longest piece in this recording project at over fifteen minutes, emphasizes melodic material that showcases both instrumental backgrounds. Modeled after a standard four-movement Baroque dance suite, each movement is named after a dance: Prelude, Courante, Loure, and Gigue. The title itself, Duo Displasia, suggests a displaced fantasia within Baroque-structured forms, as the saxophone introduces a jazz-influenced conversational approach. Drawing inspiration from the oboe's Baroque roots and the saxophone's jazz influence, each movement merges these two personalities and styles into a conversational interaction between voices. Duo Displasia was commissioned in 2014 by the Three Reeds Duo and NSULA Creative & Performing Arts and was premiered by the Three Reeds Duo in 2017 at the IDRS Conference.[62]

Performance Guide

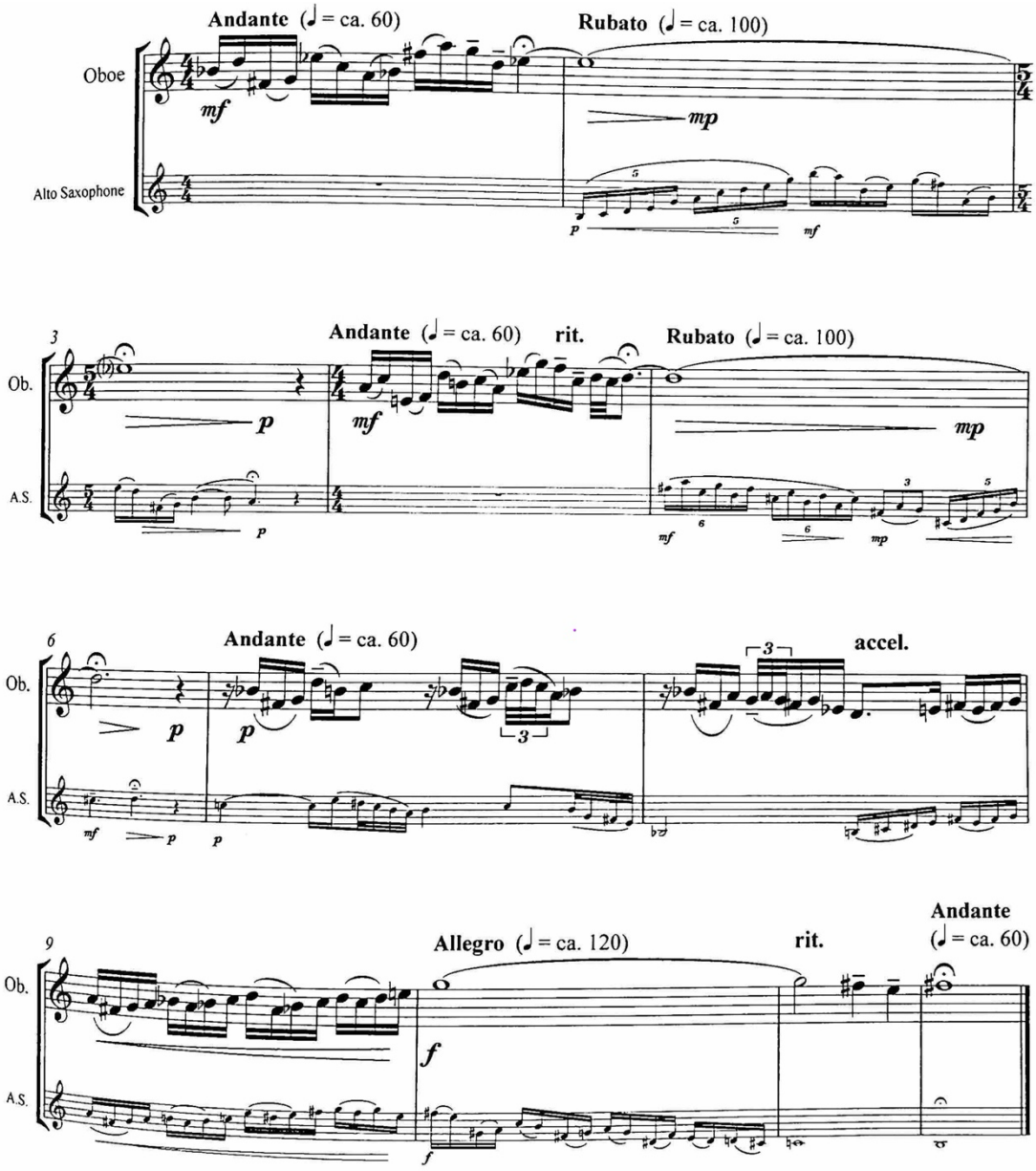
I. Prelude

While preparing the first movement, *Prelude,* I went into the first rehearsal thinking the read-down would be rather straightforward. However, it seemed to be quite the opposite. In this movement, the saxophonist infused many jazz-forward tendencies in his playing, seeming quite natural to him. It can be inferred that this would be a similarity across a wide range of saxophonists. While the influence was not drastic, it did pose the question of whether or not I should also take artistic liberties, and to what extent.

[62] "Duo Displasia (performance scores) - OB/ASAX," TrevCo Music Publishing, Accessed January 1, 2026.

For example, in an effort to match the saxophonist's stylistic freedom while balancing rhythmic and melodic integrity, I focused on adding subtle rubato and intentional phrasing. This further developed the idea that in order to have a successful performance between the oboe and saxophone, it is important to consider the experience each player has with regard to style, genre, and performance practice. Viewing figure 9, measures 1-12 indicate the written notations Morris gave. While listening to the recording made for this project, note the subtle differences, including added rubato in the oboe line and bends and other jazz-like influences added in the saxophone line.

Figure 9. Alyssa Morris: *Duo Displasia, I. Prelude*, measures 1-12.

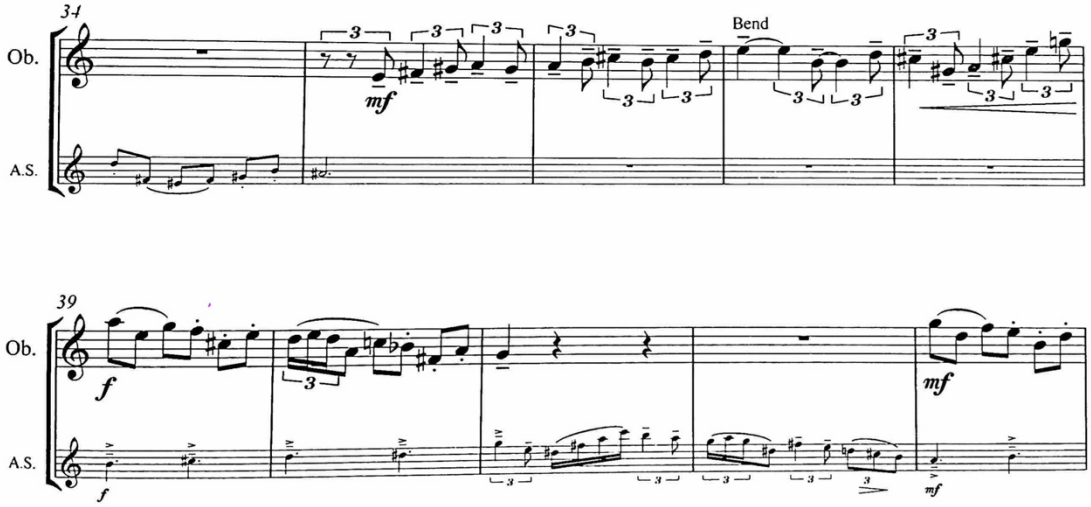


II. Courante

Practicing the second movement involved considerable metronome work on triplets and experimentation with glissandos. During rehearsals, the saxophone encouraged more swing and produced a successful swing without compressing the triplets. For the oboe, this took more practice as my initial reaction was to compress and speed up in measures 35-41. Through consistent rehearsal and listening, I was able to incorporate a jazz-inspired oboe element into this movement. Morris wrote for the oboe line to "bend" on the E natural in measure 37, which offered a bit of experimentation.

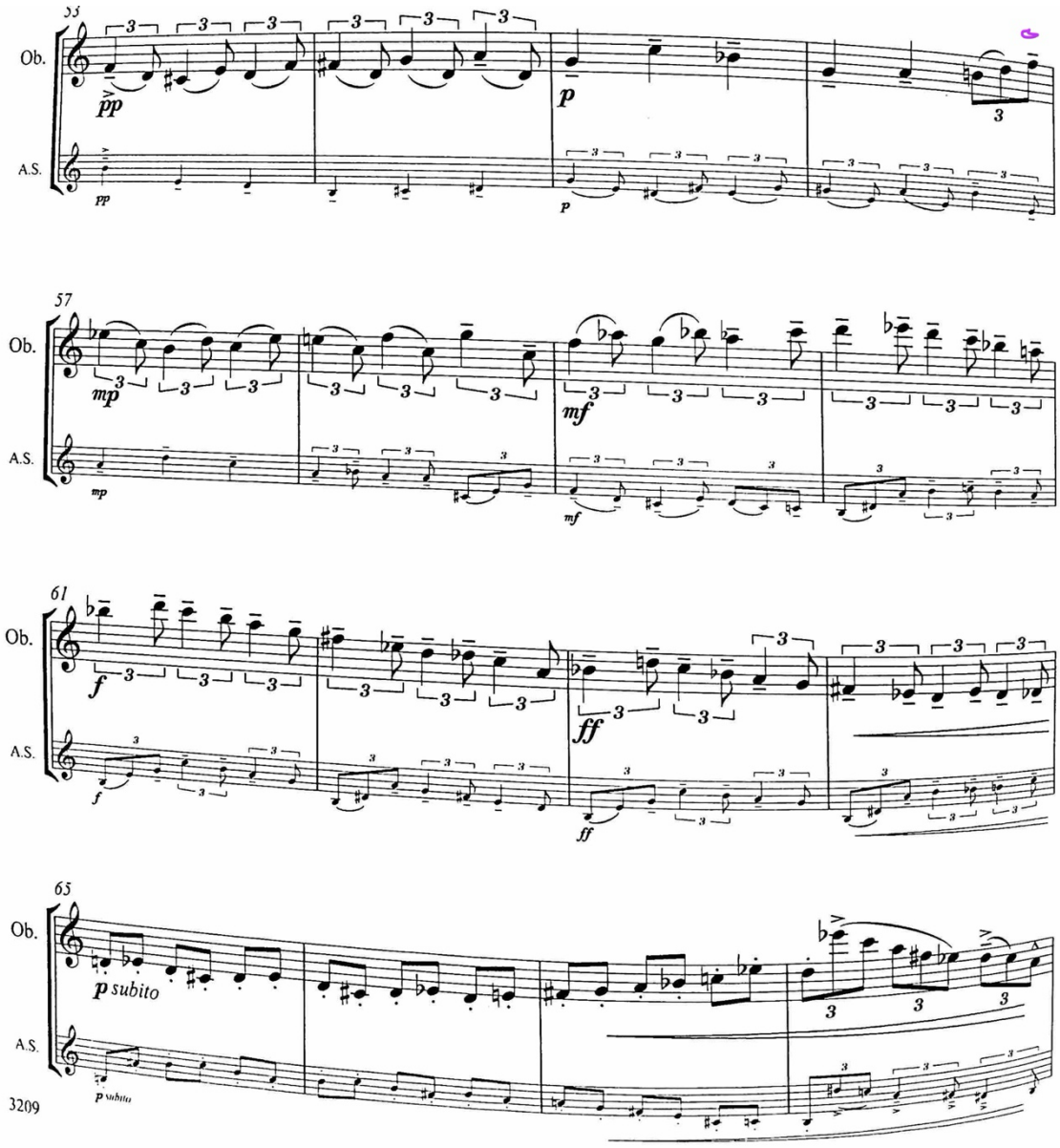
Bending pitch on an E natural is not entirely difficult with embouchure, but the bend needs to be quicker, with fewer adjustments to neighboring notes. For the recording, bending the pitch with fingerings was achieved by sliding the right ring finger to the right, off the key, exposing the tone hole and the ring attached to the key, creating an effective glissando from D to E.

Figure 10. Alyssa Morris: *Duo Displasia, II. Courante*, measures 34-43.



Another example of exact triplet placement appears in measures 55-64, with passing triplet rhythms between voices. By measure 65, the oboe and saxophone have parallel staccato notes. These needed to be short but not double-reed short, as the saxophone cannot match the shortness that a double-reed can.

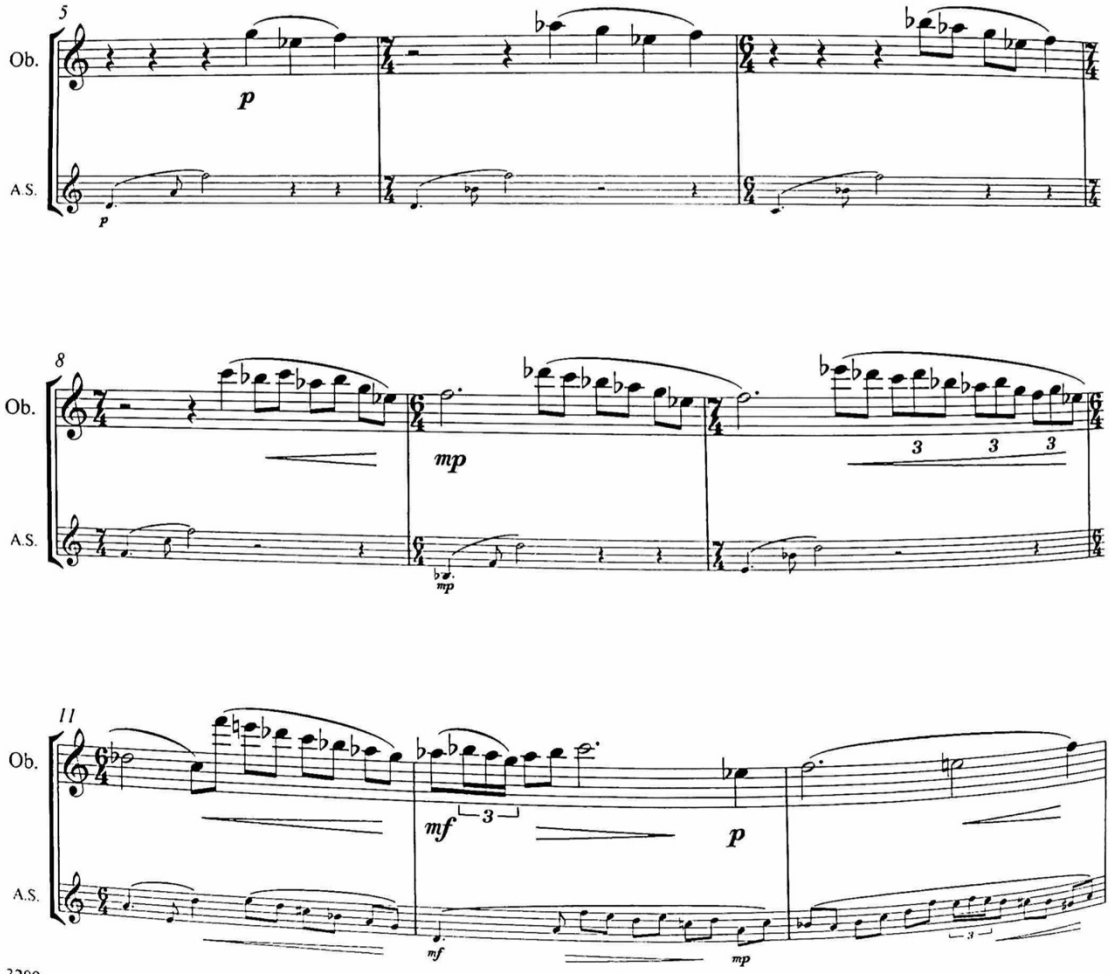
Figure 11. Alyssa Morris: *Duo Displasia, II. Courante*, measures 53-68.



III. Loure

This movement focused on drone work and on using the correct alternate fingerings to obtain the oboe's higher range smoothly. The higher range of the oboe is used in this movement, going up to a third-octave G flat. Each phrase that involved a third-octave note required a varied fingering pattern. All of the F naturals between measures 5-10 needed to match the tone color and vibrancy of the saxophone, which required regular or right-fingered F's. During the recording session, both forked and right/left F's were experimented with, and after listening to the takes, a consensus on all right and left F's was reached.

Figure 12. Alyssa Morris: *Duo Displasia,* III. Loure, measures 5-13.



Measure 11, shown in Figure 12, required an embouchure adjustment between the middle C and third-octave F, along with the corresponding left-hand third-octave F fingering, shown in Figure 13. The figure shows all the F fingerings used to achieve a clean transition between each third octave F note combination. In measures 20-21, a similar fingering for the third-octave notes was used, but because the left pinky was needed for E-flat, the right-hand A-flat key was used. In Figure 14, the third-octave F fingering, combined with lifting the left ring finger for E natural, was used. Along with

alternate fingerings, a slight ritardando was added to emphasize the musical line and help the oboe line sound less rushed.

Figures 13, 14, and 15. Varying third-octave F natural fingerings.

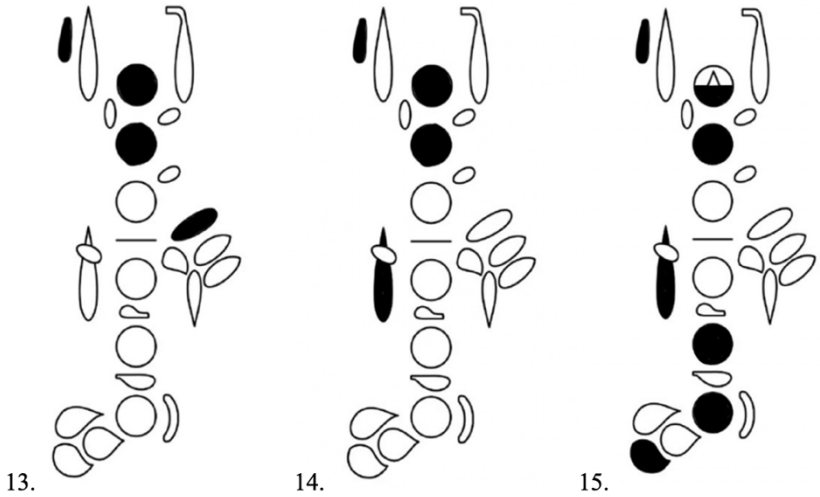


Figure 16 shows measures 27-28, where another third-octave F fingering is used, as shown in Figure 15. Figure 15 also shows a different E and F third-octave fingering. Entering the rubato portion of this movement, pick-up to measure 32-36, the oboe ascends to a third octave G-flat. This fingering for the third octave F to E-flat is a combination of the previous fingers.

Figure 16. Alyssa Morris: *Duo Displasia,* III. Loure, measures 27-28.

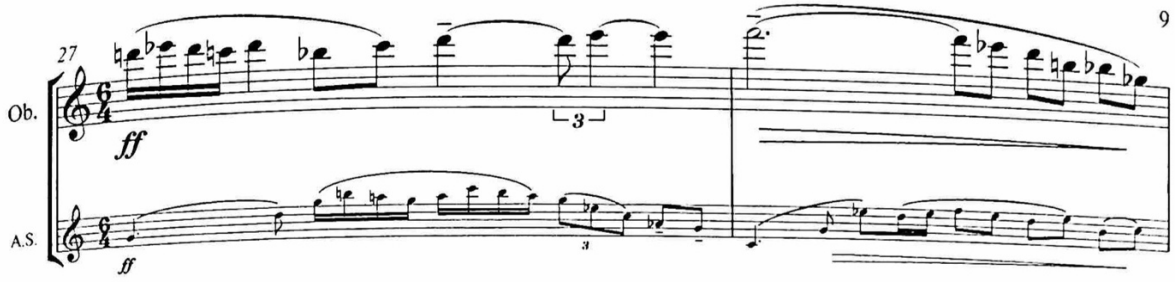
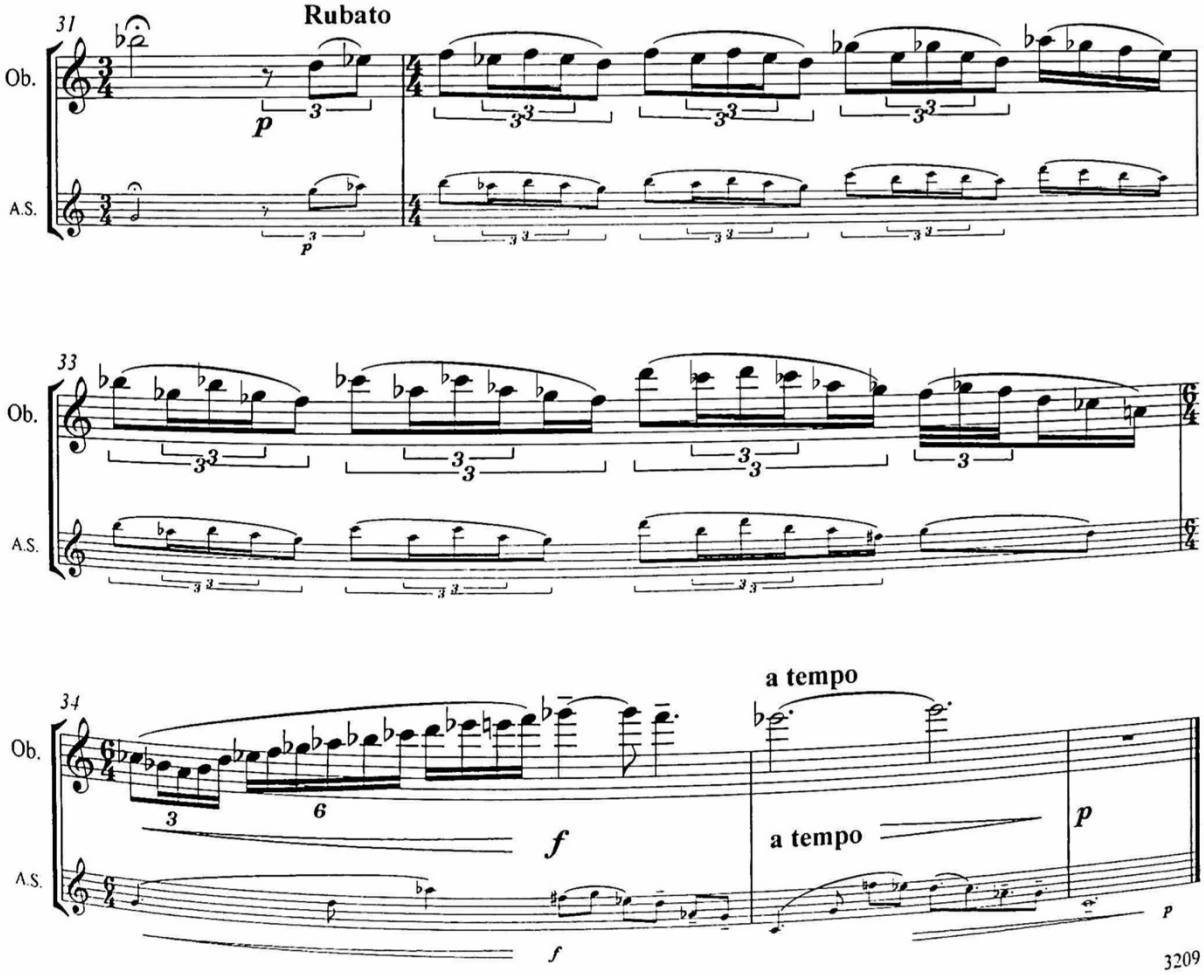


Figure 17. Alyssa Morris: *Duo Displasia,* III. Loure, measures 31-36.

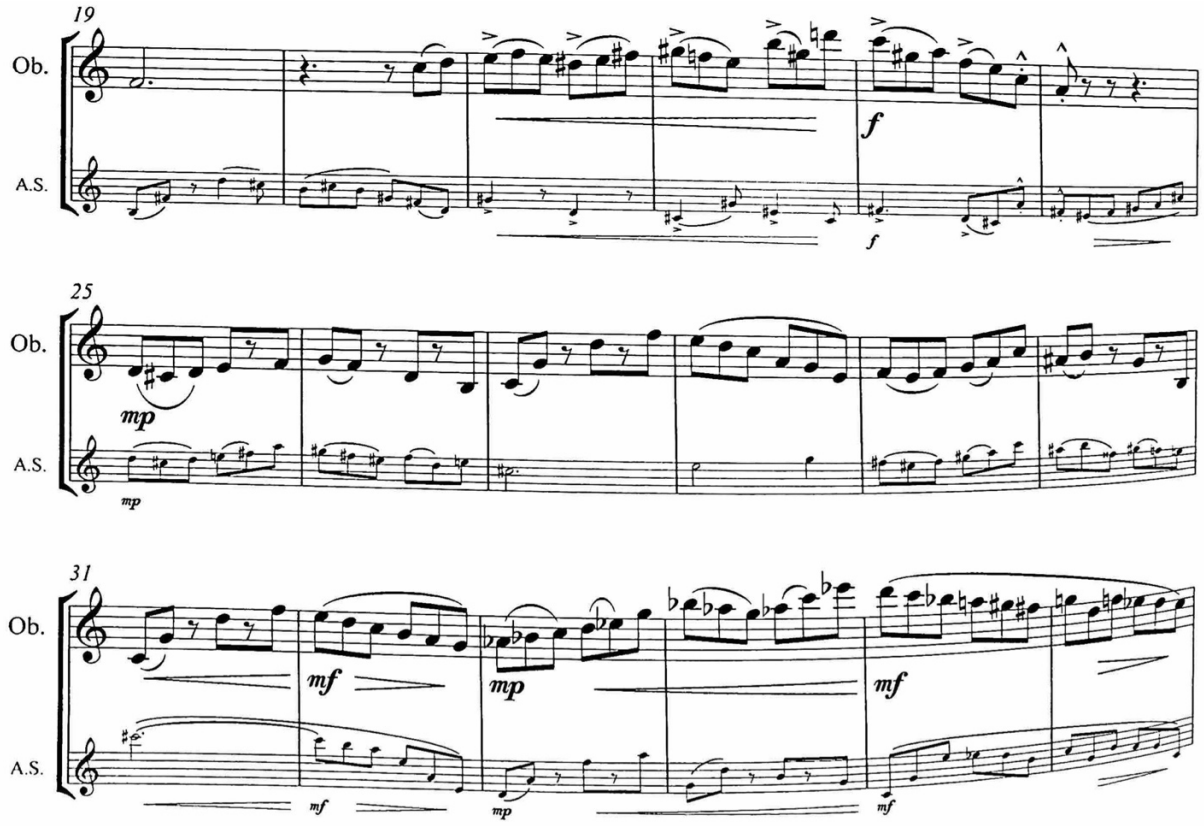


IV. Gigue

Common tendencies from previous movements were evident throughout the Gigue; particularly, the compression of triplets was a recurring issue. Another common issue was the dynamic markings in measure 25, shown in Figure 18. At mezzo piano, the dynamic was achieved mainly by reducing the saxophone line's volume, while the oboe line required additional volume and air support to produce a solid sound in the lower

register. Altogether, conscious choices in dynamics and pacing were the primary focus in this movement.

Figure 18. Alyssa Morris: *Duo Displasia, IV. Gigue*, measures 19-36.



Zippy! by Gregory Wanamaker

Composer Biography

Gregory Wanamaker (b. 1968) is widely recognized for his compositional work that highlights distinctive timbral qualities within his written instrumentations and accurate rhythmic and melodic runs. Incorporating elements of nature both technically and expressively throughout his compositions, Wanamaker has had many of his pieces recognized internationally within the woodwind community. Focusing on intricate sixteenth-note passages and precise rhythmic notations, Duo Sonata (2012) has received over 500 performances worldwide. Written for B♭ clarinet and alto saxophone, Wanamaker pairs both instrument timbres to create a unique single-reed blend, along with interconnected melodic lines and dynamic rhythmic material.

Also known for his friendly and effective collaboration skills, Wanamaker has expanded the woodwind repertoire in areas that have not been thoroughly explored before. By effectively working with woodwind musicians, Wanamaker has pushed the technical boundaries of woodwind instruments, making his works notable finalist performance pieces for major saxophone competitions such as the Adolph Sax International Competition and the Pushechnikov Foundation International Competition for Wind Instruments, Saxophone Division.[63]

Program Notes

Originally written for English horn and soprano saxophone, *Zippy!* was composed with inspiration from Wanamaker's backyard excursions in the summer of 2020. As most

[63] Wanamaker, Gregory. "Biography." Accessed January 2026.

musicians at the time were isolating themselves due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Wanamaker drew inspiration for new compositions from his surroundings. The main inspiration for *Zippy!* was from Wanamaker's interactions with a chipmunk. Quoting Wanamaker's experience with his backyard bird feeder, "there was this one chipmunk named Zippy who sorta rose to the top of her community and decided that I was a good pathway to the birds'-and-now-chipmunks' feeders hanging from various poles attached to my deck, so she began to run up my legs and back and shoulders to jump on the railing to the feeders, collect her food, and run to my neighbor's yard where she lived to store her food.[64]

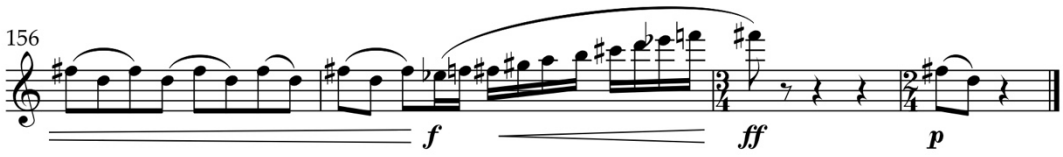
Eventually, Wanamaker decided to feed this chipmunk, whom he named Zippy, by hand, and he grew closer to the animal. Over several weeks, Wanamaker documented his interactions with Zippy on his social media platforms, elevating Zippy to a social media sensation among the musicians who followed his page. Inspired by his encounters with Zippy, Wanamaker composed a piece featuring swift melodic motifs that evoke Zippy's playful activity in his backyard. Wanamaker states, "I've spent a lot of time during the COVID-19 pandemic writing melancholy and angry music in forced isolation, during the reign of an authoritarian racist urging violence against his own constituents. Zippy! is the opposite of those pieces, as it is a recollection of the part of this troubling time when I made a friend who lifted my spirits... and now she hibernates."[65]

[64] Wanamaker, Gregory. "Biography." Accessed January 1, 2026.
[65] Wanamaker, Gregory. "Biography." Accessed January1, 2026.

Performance Guide

Originally composed for soprano saxophone and English horn, *Zippy!* was arranged by Gregory Wanamaker himself following our inquiry regarding an arrangement for oboe and alto saxophone. The aim of this arrangement is to expand the oboe and saxophone repertoire. The program notes for *Zippy!* indicate that the composition's tone is intended to mimic the characteristics of a chipmunk. To emulate these characteristics on the oboe, precise note placement and consistent runs are crucial. Extensive metronomic practice was conducted at a uniform tempo in preparation for this piece. Although the tempo marking is quarter note equals 144 beats per minute, it was ultimately decided to record the piece at a slightly slower tempo of 132. This decision was made purposefully to inform others that the indicated tempos can be approximate, as long as the character of the piece is accurately conveyed.

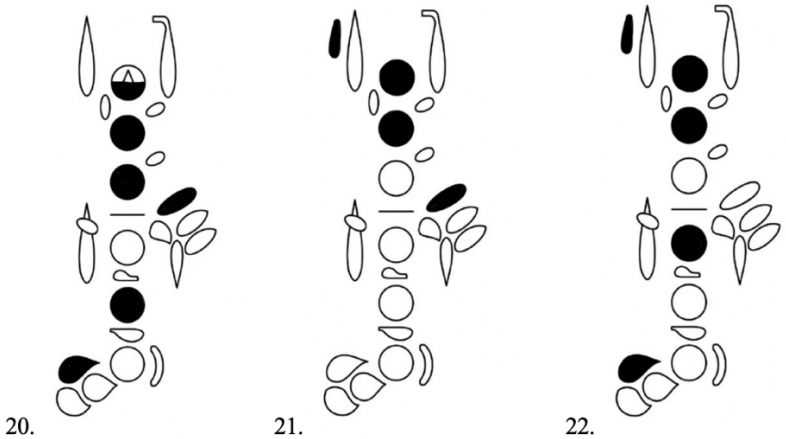
Figure 19. *Gregory Wanamaker: Zippy!*, measures 156-158.



The integration of the oboe and saxophone lines in this composition was the most gratifying aspect. Both lines harmonized seamlessly, thereby diminishing the need for larger instrumentation, while emphasizing the importance of metronomic precision. Accurate finger modifications were crucial for optimal performance. Nearly every sixteenth-note passage was accompanied by specific fingerings, as Wanamaker's compositional insight provided a rich palette of tonal colors through the extensive use of

accidentals. The final run of the piece, shown in Figure 20, required a unique fingering combination in measure 157, from E flat shown in Figure 20, F natural in Figure 21, and F sharp in Figure 22. During the recording session, keeping the tempo steady and clear between takes was essential. The only aspects of the piece that caused a tear in the voices were misread note values, as the common thematic material shifts slightly between reiterations.

Figures 20, 21, and 22. From left to right, fingerings for the second octave E flat, F natural, and F sharp.



20. 21. 22.

Places We Can No Longer Go by Jacob Nance

Composer Biography

Jacob Nance (b. 1999) is an American saxophonist and emerging composer who specializes in blending popular music styles with art music, focusing on emotional expression rather than genre classification.[66] Exploring the saxophone's connection to these physical qualities, Nance's works, *Gently (2023),* written for saxophone and piano, and *...Or Leave It (2023),* written for electronic pedal, alto saxophone, and baritone saxophone, have been showcased at a number of student and faculty recitals and festivals across the country.[67] Key compositional material, such as melodic phrasing and

Program Notes

Originally composed for two alto saxophones, *Places We Can No Longer Go (2024)* is inspired by an original poem written by Nance himself. Nance's poem reflects on past experiences and feelings, evoking acceptance of the past that brings joy and nostalgia through repeated eighth- and quarter-note rhythms. Throughout the piece, the melodic line and rhythmic pulse are intertwined between the two alto saxophones, highlighting the conversational exchange between the players. Providing context for the composition, the poem from which Nance drew inspiration is listed below and is also titled *Places We Can No Longer Go.*

> Of the time we had
> We had the time
> To live through
> And of ourselves

[66] Nance, Jacob. "About." June 6, 2023. Accessed January 1, 2026.
[67] Nance, Jacob. "About." June 6, 2023. Accessed January 1, 2026.

To feel the wind of
Summer’s days
The ducks that swam
Waters in Hoel Park

To see yellow green
Matted felt midair
The lights off after
Forty-five minutes in Lions

The hot jazz
And cool swing of ICE
And grease fries there
Or sometimes back

To walk around Gaylord
Seeing statues of
Heroes and idols,
Duck pond memory

To imbibe not just
Liquid warmth's sweet caress
But the camaraderie
And courage within

To view films, in turn,
To judge their merit
As if reviews were
Currency in our little market

To lay out on grass
To speak within ourselves
Let others in,
Lie with the stars

To see the pier
And the wonders beheld
A beautiful day
In a city of wind

To see the city
And all it’s worth
The late music plays as we
fill ourselves with its presence

To sense that time
Was growing to a close
And instead of halting it
Revealing; accepting.

Of the time we had
We had the time
To live through
And of ourselves.

Of the time we have
We have no time
To exist within
One another again

But maybe a day
Here and there
Rekindle old memory
Flames in the furnace

To burn brightly
Then not again
Smoldering ashes
Overtake our histories

Youthful joys turn
Seamless into
Aging woes,
And such is life.

As Emerson once said
Of food and books,
While I cannot retain you all
You have made me.

Of the time we had,
I cherished it all.
Of the time we had,
Often, I wish it back.[68]

[68] Nance, Jacob. "About." June 6, 2023. Accessed January 1, 2026.

Performance Guide

The preparation of this work necessitated warming up within the lower register of the oboe. The initial two notes of the piece are a slurred D# to B#, followed by an A#, as seen in Figure 23. It is important to keep the oboist's embouchure open and low to prevent tonal cracking or pitch inaccuracies. Due to the lower register constraints of the oboe, which vary depending on the model, these notes may tend to be slightly flat in intonation. It is important to communicate this consideration clearly to the saxophonist. Rehearsals focused on intonation adjustments, particularly in measures 44-50 shown in Figure 24. In measure 50, I employed my right pinky to depress the C key in conjunction with the high C fingering to produce a softer piano dynamic. The recording process for this piece was notably straightforward, as the individual parts were distinctly delineated and the music naturally guided the performance.

Figure 23. *Jacob Nance: Places We Can No Longer Go*, measures 1-9.

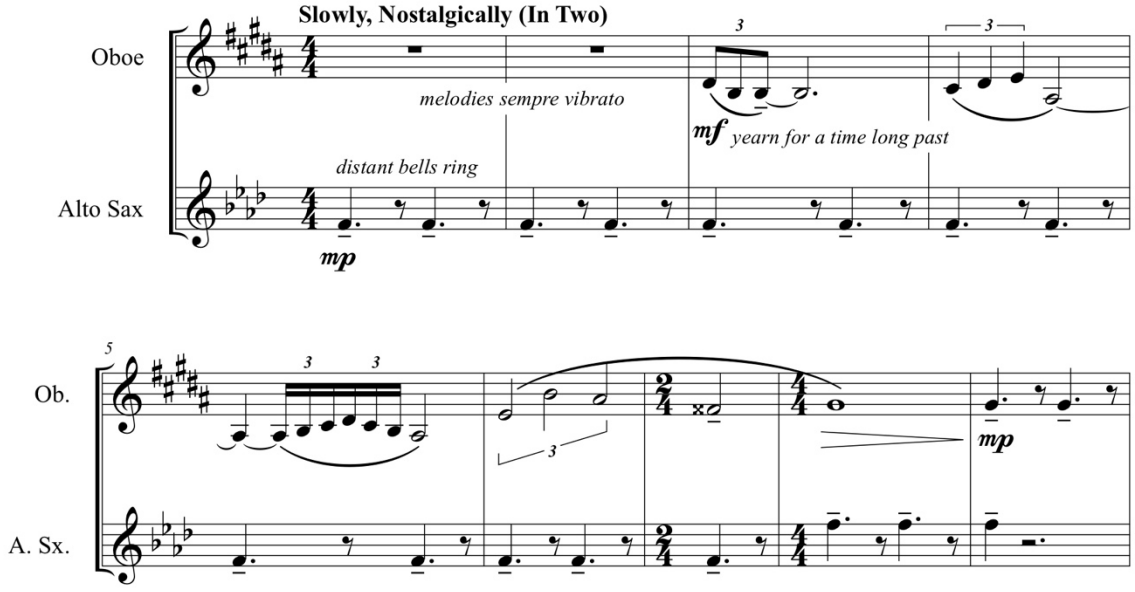
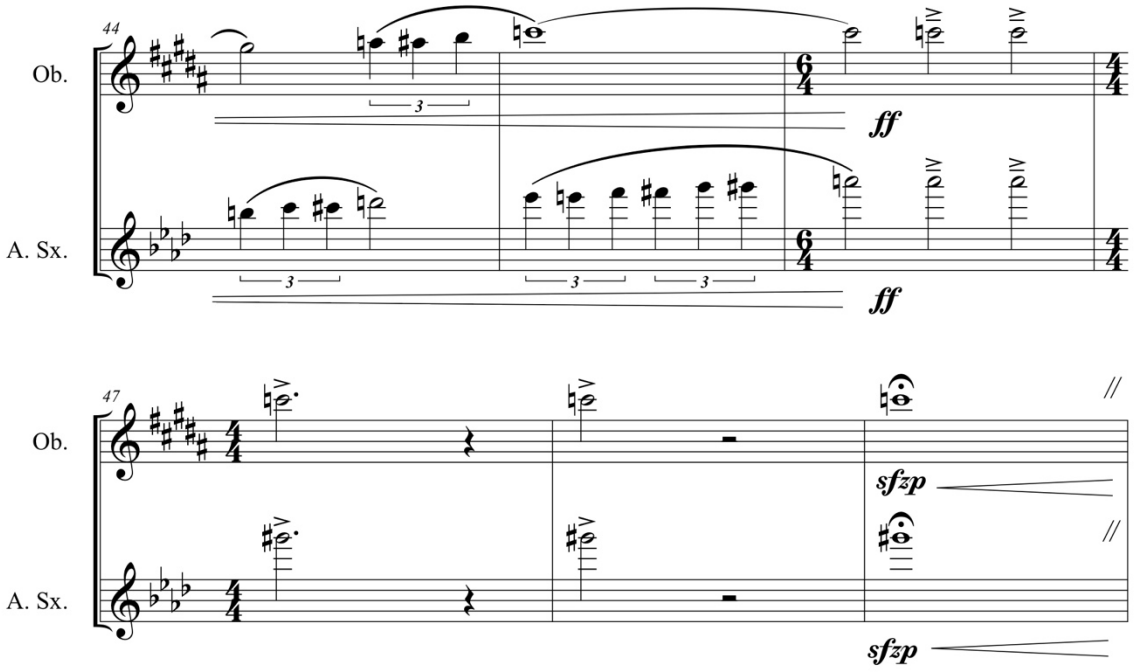


Figure 24. *Jacob Nance: Places We Can No Longer Go*, measures 44-49.



Penumbra from Shadows Cast Through by Myles Kellerman

Composer Biography

Myles Kellerman (b. 1997) is a guitarist and emerging composer known for his reimagined compositions, which incorporate his interpretations of external art forms, personal experiences, and cultural influences. As an emerging composer, Kellerman uses his knowledge of string instruments to reshape the woodwind soundscape in his wind compositions.[69]

[69] Myles Kellerman, email to author, January 1, 2026.

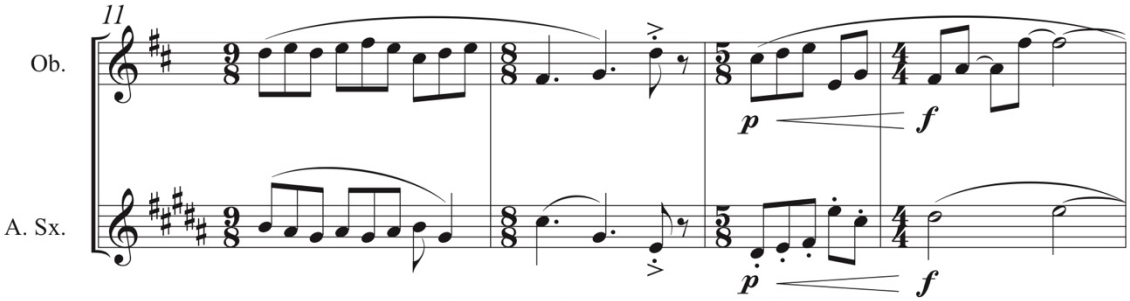
Program Notes

Penumbra (2026) explores the musical parallels between physical shadows and musical intervals, focusing on the spatial relationship between cast shadows and written intervals. It emphasizes the technical accessibility of both the oboe and the saxophone, creating a performance environment that encourages an enjoyable experience during rehearsals and performances. Kellerman adds an oboe solo to this work, written with an improvisational undertone that varies conceptually from one performance to another. This characterization symbolizes the interplay between light and shadow in the penumbra of an eclipse, which lies between full illumination and shadow. As part of a collection of works titled *Shadows Cast Through*, other works in this collection include *Dappled Sunlight and Venetian Blinds*. Each work parallels its title and the relationship between light and shadow, and interval play.

Performance Guide

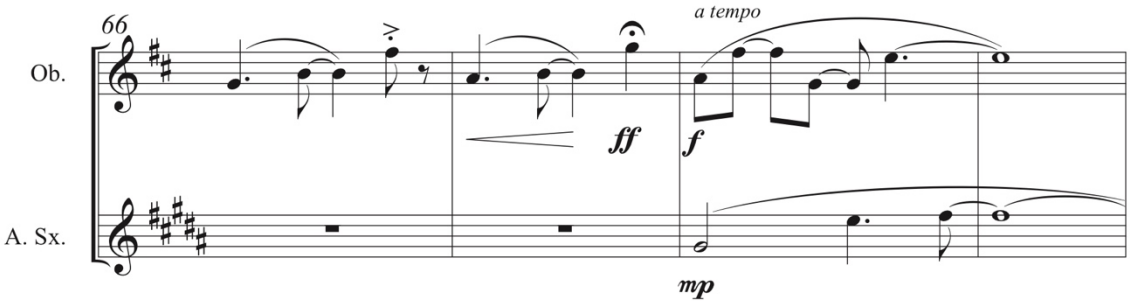
Preparing and executing this movement involved significant collaboration with the composer, as both parties contributed creative and alternative musical ideas. Myles introduced innovative musical ideas that were highly enjoyable to perform. The staccato notes in measure 5 should not be too short, but rather proportional to the saxophones' staccato capability. A recurrent theme throughout this movement is to avoid cutting off the ends of phrases; for example, in measure 12 (Figure 25), the accented staccato note should be held for a full eighth note.

Figure 25. *Myles Kellerman: Penumbra*, measures 11-14.



Kellerman recommends a slight hesitation before transitioning to the next phrase. A relative dynamic range is essential in this piece; the forte should be loud but not aggressive. For the improvisatory section in the oboe line from measures 49 to 67, additional rubato and ornamentation are encouraged. Kellerman suggests that the solo is an elongated melody with subtle accelerando and ritardando throughout. Given the fluctuation in tempo throughout the oboe cadenza from measures 49 to 67, ensure that the oboe line maintains a swift tempo, cuing the saxophone in measure 68, as shown in Figure 26. This cue should be in the tempo previously taken, that is, the tempo before the cadenza. A common misconception in the oboe line is to take a considerably slower tempo leading into measure 68, which is not notated in the oboist's line; the tempo should be restored to the quicker tempo.

Figure 26. *Myles Kellerman: Penumbra*, measures 66-69.



Luminous by Devanii

Composer Biography

GianCarlo Devanii Lay (b. 2003) is a saxophonist and composer who works to blend contemporary classical saxophone repertoire and technique with improvisational characterization. With growing international recognition from recent compositional and performance collaborations, Devanii is known for his high-quality compositional work and saxophone performances across a wide array of forms, from duo chamber works to full orchestrations. Recently premiering an original composition written for saxophone octet, *Transcendence (2025),* at the 2026 NASA Conference in Ohio.[70] Devanii has received glowing reviews for his ability to combine energy, emotion, and a wide array of colors by writing effective technical phrases and intertwining scoring throughout his compositions. His works show a balanced appreciation for both the instruments he writes for and the collaborators he works with.

Program Notes

Luminous (2026) was commissioned to further diversify the oboe - saxophone duet repertoire. At just under five minutes long, Luminous is a key part of this dissertation, showcasing the strengths of both the oboe and saxophone. Devanii demonstrates lyrical phrasing in the oboe line while illustrating the flickering of light in the saxophone line through quick ascending and descending sixteenth-note runs. Inspired by the *Fox Duo's* personalities, Devanii states that "Luminous is a word I think of when describing someone who brightens your day upon every interaction. For me, that would

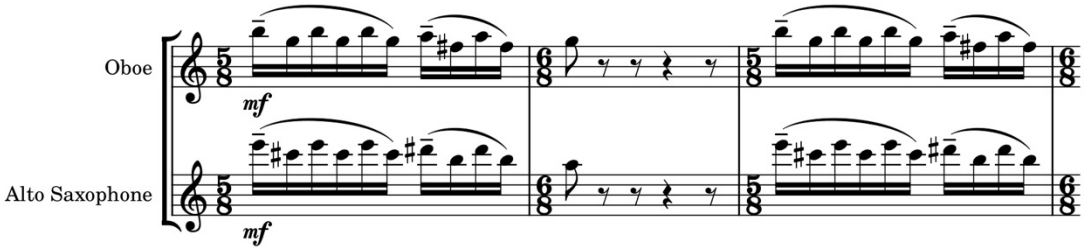
[70] Lay, GianCarlo Devanii. Email to author, January 1, 2026.

be a word befitting of Lauren and Matthew Fox."[71] In correspondence with this central idea, Devanii interwove the concept of light, as *Luminous* explores how "light flickers and dances in certain environments" and how a composition can paint such a picture.[72]

Performance Guide

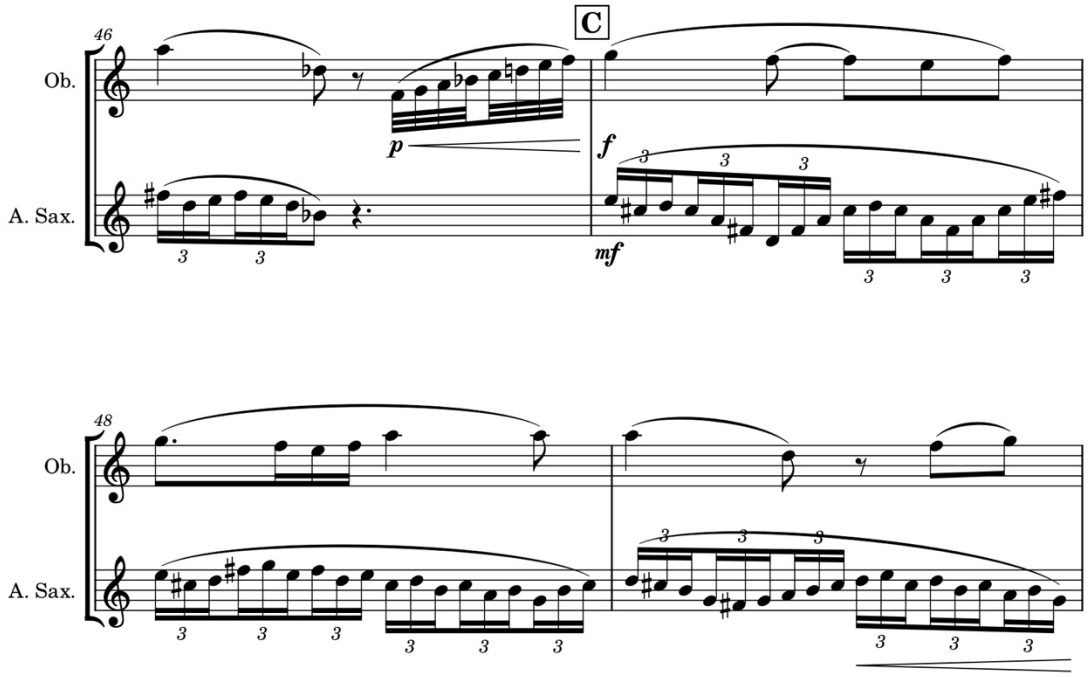
The preparation of this piece necessitated deliberate fingerwork between small intervals. In measures 1 and 3, the oboe line transitions between B natural and G natural, then between A natural and F-sharp, as shown in Figure 27. Ensuring a crisp and even transition between these notes was of most importance, as these intervals can be inconsistent in placement and can cause additional notes to be produced. An alternate A fingering was used, incorporating the back octave key instead of the side octave key, for a smoother transition between the A natural and F sharp notes.

Figure 27. *Devanni: Luminous*, measures 1-3.



[71] Lay. Email to author, January 1, 2026.
[72] Lay. Email to author, January 1, 2026.

Figure 28. *Devanni: Luminous*, measures 46-49.



Additionally, metronome practice on the rhythmic material is essential, as the saxophone line predominantly plays subdivisions under the oboe line. Particularly in measures 46-49, both passages require consistent subdivision counting in the oboe and saxophone lines, as shown in Figure 28. Overall, this piece showcased a relaxed breathing plan and accessible technical skill across both oboe and saxophone parts, allowing for a smooth recording and performance process.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

The oboe - saxophone duo exhibits significant acoustic compatibility despite its historical underrepresentation in chamber music. This project aimed to establish a foundational scholarly framework and apply practical performance methods for the oboe - saxophone ensemble, while exploring its contemporary relevance through a performance guide and collaborations with composers on commissioned works.

Historical and practical rehearsal analyses revealed that the oboe and saxophone share more structural and conceptual similarities than their respective performance traditions initially indicated. By examining their bore styles, adaptations, and the impact of the Boehm key system, as well as their shared etude books that promote expressive lyricism, a natural point of convergence becomes evident. At the same time, differences in sound production, such as reed and mouthpiece design, volume projection, vibrato creation, and ergonomic finger placement, pose interpretive challenges that require thoughtful discussion and negotiation among musicians. Rather than viewing these traits as obstacles, they should be regarded as opportunities for creative problem-solving, improving ensemble balance, and developing innovative rehearsal techniques.

In the broader realm of chamber music, the combination of oboe and saxophone reflects an ongoing exploratory approach that has significantly influenced ensemble development in the 20th and 21st centuries. This exploratory spirit is demonstrated through the creation of reed quintets and various commissioning projects inspired by it. Modern chamber music emphasizes expanding timbral diversity and fostering collaborative songwriting, with the oboe and saxophone playing key roles within these

groups. The six works highlighted in this project showcase the diverse compositional possibilities available to the oboe - saxophone duo. Through rhythmic “hocketing”, jazz, Baroque interpretation and reimagining, lyricism, and modern harmonic structures, these pieces demonstrate the ensemble’s stylistic range. The commissioning and recording of these works further affirm that collaboration between performers and composers remains crucial to the ensemble’s potential growth.

This project advances the oboe and saxophone fields by offering a curated collection of accessible duets, a historical overview, highlights of similarities, and a performance guide with fingering, breathing techniques, challenges, and personal insights. The inclusion of newly commissioned works and newly arranged alto saxophone and oboe duets extends the known repertoire, while accessible recordings help facilitate and broaden understanding of the duo’s interpretation. Collectively, these elements serve as a valuable resource for performers, educators, and composers interested in exploring this instrumentation further.

From an educational perspective, this pairing fosters cross-disciplinary awareness between double-reed and single-reed traditions, promoting technical flexibility and stylistic versatility. Artistically, this duo challenges traditional ideas about instrumental identity, suggesting that collaborative potential often goes beyond conventional ensemble boundaries—especially in an era that increasingly values innovation and inclusivity in programming. Future research should expand commissioning initiatives and explore additional formed-duo ensembles. Investigations into acoustical studies, comparisons of projection and blending of the oboe and saxophone, and inclusion of oboe - saxophone repertoire in college chamber music curricula are other directions to pursue. As interest

and growth in the oboe - saxophone duo continue, expanding the repertoire will further legitimize the ensemble and enhance its accessibility and popularity.

Ultimately, the oboe - saxophone duo should be seen not as a novelty but as a distinguished and expressive chamber ensemble with unique artistic value. Through collaboration, research, and performance, this project exemplifies how the fusion of oboe and saxophone offers a wide range of timbral possibilities. The future of this duo depends on performers and composers willing to explore the intersection of difference and unity, where innovation in chamber music often begins.

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APPENDIX A.

OBOE - SAXOPHONE DUO REPERTOIRE LIST

Title	Composer	Publication Year	Purchase Location	Instrumentation
Duet for Oboe and Tenor Saxophone, Op. 1001	Beatty, Stephen W.	2017	*https://imslp.org*	Ob./T.Sax
Duet for Oboe and Alto Saxophone, Op. 2019	Beatty, Stephen W.	2020	*https://imslp.org*	Ob./A.Sax
Duet for Oboe and Soprano Saxophone, Op. 2008	Beatty, Stephen W.	2020	*https://imslp.org*	Ob./S.Sax
Duet for Oboe and Tenor Saxophone, Op. 2023	Beatty, Stephen W.	2020	*https://imslp.org*	Ob./T.Sax
Signals Cross	Blaha, Kyle	2011	Contact Composer	Ob.,Eh./ A.Sax
Steadfast	Brown, Derek	2023	*https://derekbrownsax.com*	Ob./A.Sax
Gauntlet	Burel, Joshua	2021	*https://joshuaburel.com*	Ob./A.Sax
Suíte para oboe e sax	Dantas, Victor Vitoriano	2013	*https://imslp.org*	Ob./S.Sax, A.Sax, T.Sax
Luminous	Devanii	2026	Contact Composer	Ob./A.Sax
Three Reed Suite	Hundemer, Thomas	2011	Contact Composer	Ob., Eh./A.Sax, T.Sax
Shadows Cast Through	Kellerman, Myles	2026	Contact Composer	Ob./A.Sax
Dawn to Dusk: Duo for Oboe and Saxophone	Leitão, Filipe	2018	*https://sheetmusicplus.com*	Ob./A.Sax

Little Rivers	Liewen, Peter	2018	*https://peterlieuwen.com*	Ob./A.Sax
Pastorale	Maroney, Marcus	2011	*https://mkmaroney.com*	Ob./A.Sax
Duo Displasia	Morris, Alyssa	2017	*https://trevcomusic.com*	Ob./A.Sax
The Journey	Rose, Richard	2011	Contact Composer	Ob./S.Sax, A.Sax
Double Cadenza	Wanamaker, Gregory	2011	*https://gregorywanamaker.com*	Oboe, Tenor Saxophone
Zippy!	Wanamaker, Gregory	2020	*https://gregorywanamaker.com*	Eh./S.Sax

APPENDIX B.

RECORDING FILES

(Consult attached files)